Teaching the Holocaust: Some Educational and Theological Perspectives.

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Abstract.

This thesis sets out to examine the aims, methods and results of Holocaust education in state secondary schools. Having evaluated other research in this area and identified the pedagogic issues that affect teaching about the Holocaust, I decided to focus on teachers of history and religious education. Two preliminary chapters analysed aspects of contemporary scholarly debate that seemed relevant to teaching and the governmental framework of expectations and regulations in which the subject is taught.

Initially questionnaires were issued to local schools in an attempt to create a 'picture' of how the Holocaust was being taught. The issues that came from the questionnaire responses were then incorporated into the less formal interviews. The study showed that there was considerable confusion regarding the aims of Holocaust education and that teaching about the Holocaust is inescapably bound up with questions of ethics and fundamental world-views. In addition to this there was evidence that current scholarly debate was affecting teaching in many, often subtle, ways. This was particularly true of issues of uniqueness, the place of anti-Semitism in Holocaust education and the politicisation of the Holocaust.

I then offered a theological critique of the governmental assumptions behind the teaching of the Holocaust and some of the aims and methods employed in the classroom. My chief findings were firstly that the teaching of the Holocaust is more varied in quality and problematic in outcome than some of its advocates have acknowledged. Secondly I argued that there is a vital role for the teaching of the subject in RE as well as in history in order to combat religiously inspired prejudice and conflict. Complicated and fraught as the subject may be, while it is being taught we should ensure that it is taught well.

Acknowledgements.

Over the last six years I have had unwavering support and encouragement from my advisor, Dr Sean Gill. It has been an interesting and sometimes difficult journey. Without his patience, kind words and gentle supervision, I doubt I would have made it this far. I am extremely grateful.

I have benefited enormously from the emotional support of a number of people. My mother, Yvonne Jordan, has always made me feel capable of achieving anything. Thank you also for helping me to collate the information on the questionnaires. I would also like to thank my family and friends, in particular Michelle Mahon and Amanda Sheppard, for the encouragement they have given and for the times they have been there to listen and support me. And Arron, thank you for the faith you have in me and the belief that you have in us.

Finally, this study could not have been completed without the help I received from Secondary School History and RE teachers. The information and advice that was given to me online at www.schoolhistory.co.uk was invaluable. And I cannot thank enough the teachers in Swindon, Avon and Wiltshire who gave up their time for me. Having taken a step into their hectic world I appreciate more than ever the pressures and difficulties they have to face each day and this makes their help even more valued. While the study may raise some negative issues, the experience of meeting teachers and visiting schools can only be viewed positively.

Author's Declaration.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other university for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

SIGNED: 

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30 November 2004

Contents.

Chapter One: Research Issues and Methods

The Place of the Thesis within the Field

According to the British educationalist Deidre Burke, there has been a serious imbalance in the field of Holocaust studies between the very considerable amount of time and energy devoted to academic research into the history and significance of what happened and the far more limited scholarly discussion of pedagogic issues which that history raises for schools.[1] She goes on to argue that what is now needed is 'a shift from a content-driven paradigm of transmission to one which recognises the challenges facing teacher and learner.'[2]

Burke herself made a significant start in carrying out this project in her own PhD research completed in 1998.[3] She began by interviewing ten international Holocaust educators from a wide variety of countries in order to establish their perceptions of the problems involved in teaching the subject.[4] She then used group interviews and questionnaires to ascertain the impact of Holocaust teaching on one hundred fourteen year old pupils from four West Midland secondary schools. One of her conclusions was that whilst teaching the Holocaust at this level was indeed a transformative educational experience for most of the pupils, more attention needs to be paid to the intellectual and emotional challenges the subject presents. Indeed in her view, 'the Holocaust is unique in the range of struggle presented to the learner.'[5] These problems included the traumatic nature of the subject and the difficulty pupils experienced in understanding the motives and actions of the perpetrators.[6] Notwithstanding these difficulties she argued that in practice the broad aims of the educators matched the learning outcomes achieved by pupils in so far as the former sought to draw out a range of broad moral lessons about racism and human rights from their teaching of the subject. She encapsulated this view in the words of one pupil who said:

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[1] Deidre Burke, 'Holocaust Education: Teaching and Learning', in E. Maxwell & J. Roth (eds), Remembering for the Future. The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide, Volume 3 Memory, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 515-519.
[2] Ibid., p. 517. Burke's own research which seeks to take up her call is contained in Holocaust Education: Teaching and Learning Perspectives, University of Wolverhampton PhD, 1998.
[3] Deidre Burke, The Holocaust in Education: Teacher and Learner Perspectives', University of Wolverhampton PhD, 1998.
[4] Ibid., p. 101.
[5] Ibid., p. 164.
[6] Ibid., pp. 196-213.

> It helps us to understand why we should never let something like this happen again. It helps us to understand why we shouldn't persecute people who are different.[7]

Her recommendations were that teaching the Holocaust could indeed help 'to make the world a better place', but if this is to happen teachers need more resources and particularly in-service training in the pedagogic issues raised by the subject.[8]

Burke's is, in the British context, an invaluable pioneering study and one part of my thesis will be concerned with evaluating her key arguments. However my own work differs from hers in significant respects. Whilst aware of the important role in Holocaust teaching in schools played by departments of Religious Studies, Burke limited her study to the teaching of History despite her argument that the ultimate goal of Holocaust teaching was to promote ethical values amongst pupils and her further concern that there was a need for pupils to learn about the specifically Jewish dimensions of the subject. I have tried to examine the teaching of the Holocaust in both History and Religious Education. Another contrast is that my work differs in focus from hers in that it seeks to provide a Christian theological perspective on the teaching of the Holocaust in British secondary schools rather than one that is primarily that of a secular educationalist. I have also concentrated on the experience of teachers rather than pupils which relates to another difference of approach in that I have paid considerably greater attention to the broader intellectual context in which the subject is now taught and its impact on how teachers perceive and put across the topic. This is not meant to be a criticism of Burke's work. It would, however, be fair to say that since she carried out her study, research and publication on the Holocaust has become much more focussed on problems concerning the transmission of knowledge than simply on establishing the facts of what happened and that the lively debate that has ensued bears directly on the pedagogic concerns that she sought to raise.

The main point of her argument, however, remains valid. What has not changed is that whilst there has been considerable discussion of these issues amongst Holocaust educators at university level, Burke's argument about the paucity of studies concerned with teaching the subject in schools still stands.[9] In the

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[7] Ibid., p. 250.
[8] Ibid., p. 249.
[9] For a discussion of Holocaust teaching at university level see G. Shimoni (ed.), The Holocaust in University Teaching (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991).

British context the only other significant field work has been the small-scale studies of school children and their perceptions of the Holocaust carried out in the North East of England by Geoffrey Short of the University of Hertfordshire.[10] Short's focus and his conclusions were both different from and less sanguine than Burke's, drawing attention to the way in which the teaching of the subject ran the risk of actually creating anti-Semitic prejudices amongst children by portraying Jews as perennial victims and by exposing children to examples of Nazi propaganda. According to Short, 'a fundamental canon of sound pedagogy is that any form of teaching must take cognizance of pupils' existing knowledge. Failure to do so is likely to render the teaching at best ineffective and at worst counter productive.'[11] He raised a further concern that children could come to regard the Germans as uniquely evil purveyors of anti-Semitism and racism concluding that 'it would be ironic indeed if children acquired ill-founded prejudices as a result of studying the Holocaust.'[12] Again, one of my aims will be to evaluate these claims in the light of my own research.

Two further works raise important pedagogic questions in the British context. In 1993 Carrie Supple published a book entitled From Prejudice to Genocide: Learning about the Holocaust.[13] This was designed to be a textbook for use in schools by teachers and pupils and whilst it was in no sense a work of theory, it was specifically designed to meet what Carrie considered to be shortcomings in the existing literature. Its content and approach make clear its important implicit assumptions about how the topic should be conveyed in the classroom. A notable feature is its adoption of a holistic perspective that tries to devote space both to the history of anti-Semitism whilst also conveying a more universal message about the persecution of minority groups such as Gypsies and the mentally handicapped. Although imaginatively illustrated and designed to engage with pupils through a series of exercises and questions the result of this decision is inevitably a long and complex text that would require a great deal more time than is usually available in

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[10] Geoffrey Short, 'Teaching about the Holocaust: a consideration of some ethical and pedagogic issues', in Educational Studies, vol. 20, no. 1, 1994, pp. 53-67; and Geoffrey Short, 'The relevance of children's perceptions of Jewish culture and identity', in The British Educational Research Journal, vol. 20, no. 4, 1994, pp. 393-405. Ronnie Landau of Leo Baeck College London has also interviewed teachers and university lecturers engaged in Holocaust education, though he has not published his findings in a systematic form. See Ronnie S. Landau, Studying the Holocaust: Issues Readings and Documents, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 11.

[11] Short, Geoffrey, 'Teaching the Holocaust: Some Reflections on a Problematic Area,' In the British Journal of Religious Education, Vol. 14, 1991, pp. 28-34, p. 29.

[12] Short, 'Teaching', p. 62.

[13] Carrie Supple, From Prejudice to Genocide: Learning about the Holocaust, (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 1993).

schools if it were to be worked through in detail. Nevertheless Carrie's argument in favour of both a particularist (Jewish) focus and a more universal discussion of minorities and human rights in the teaching of the subject, raises a number of dilemmas to which I shall need to return.

In a more recent and overtly theoretical collection of essays, Teaching the Holocaust: Educational Dimensions, Principles and Practice, the editor Ian Davies remarks that 'there are massive pedagogical challenges' involved in teaching the subject in schools which include its place within relatively low status subjects such as RE and History; the limited amount of time devoted to the subject; and above all how to present the subject and decide what kind of educational aims are valid. Although useful at raising stimulating pedagogic questions, the volume provides no evidence as to how these are actually being tackled in schools.[14]

The Scope of the Thesis

This introductory chapter discusses the *modus operandi* that was adopted and some of the methodological problems that this raises. Chapter two provides an analysis of important current debates within Holocaust scholarship. The aim of this chapter is not to provide an exhaustive account of all of the key trends in contemporary Holocaust scholarship - a task which would in any case be impossible given the diversity of work within the field – but instead to concentrate on developments which seem to have important implications for the way in which the subject is taught in schools since these have also impacted upon wider public consciousness of the Holocaust. This is an important question partly because both governmental thinking and the teaching materials used in schools continue to be heavily influenced by the work of academics within the field and by the wider public debate. At the same time the debates and disagreements amongst scholars about the way in which their subject is moving also help to illuminate the problems that teachers of the Holocaust face in contemporary society. One purpose of the later empirical research will be to ascertain how far teachers are aware of these issues and how far they are reflected in their descriptions of their teaching practices.

Chapter three begins by describing the governmental framework within which the Holocaust is taught in state secondary schools which is a necessary preamble

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[14] Ian Davies (ed.), Teaching the Holocaust; Educational Dimensions, Principles and Practice, (London: Continuum, 2000).

to understanding the context in which the subject is taught and the constraints and opportunities experienced by teachers. It goes on to highlight and critically discuss a number of issues that are raised by governmental policy and its underlying assumptions by making use of material provided by the Department of Education and by local educational authorities. It also discusses governmental material relating to the creation and promotion of Holocaust Memorial Day since this has been explicitly linked to Holocaust teaching in schools by the government and provides a particularly clear statement of its thinking about the intended learning outcomes. In the empirical research it will be necessary to ask how far teachers are aware of, subscribe to, and implement governmental policy.

Chapter four provides an analysis of material gathered from secondary school teachers, which is discussed in the light of the questions raised in the second and third chapters. In order to understand the aims and methods used in teaching about the Holocaust in secondary schools, at the beginning of the spring term 2002 I sent out 120 questionnaires to all of the secondary schools in Avon, Swindon and Wiltshire.[15] Half of these were for the attention of the History department and half for the attention of the Religious Education department since these were the two principal areas of the curriculum in which the subject appeared. The aims for this part of the research were broad; I wanted to create an overall 'picture' of the treatment of this subject within schools. The questions were designed to ascertain the following:

- How long teachers devoted to studying the Holocaust.
- Whether they used the Schemes of Work as provided by the QCA or for RE the Agreed Syllabus and if so, how these could be improved.
- Whether other groups persecuted by the Nazis were included.
- Which resources were used.
- The importance attached to this topic of study.
- Whether teaching the Holocaust presents any unique problems in the opinion of teachers.

The questionnaires also left space for a more open-ended response from teachers who wished to make comments of their own. All of those who replied to both the questionnaires and took part in personal interviews were told that neither they nor their schools would be identified in the thesis, although I do retain a

[15] See appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaires.

complete set of numbered questionnaires and transcripts which can be consulted by scholars.[16]

In total 27 History teachers (45%) and 22 RE teachers (37%) replied. This return rate is not particularly high, but realistically I had not envisaged a return above 50% given the time pressures experienced by most teachers. The choice of geographical area was partly determined by available time and resources. However, it was also one that contained three different types of location: inner city schools in the case of Bristol; a rapidly growing prosperous town and hinterland in the case of Swindon; and the rural environment of Wiltshire. Whilst I would not claim that this provided a sample which is representative of all areas of the country (for example there is no large-scale Jewish community or Jewish school in the region chosen), it is one which is not untypical of many areas in terms of its range of social class and physical environments.

One important purpose of the questionnaires was to clarify and if necessary redefine the nature of the research issues being addressed. Another was to identify teachers whose responses were sufficiently detailed and interesting to suggest that they would be profitable sources for more in-depth one to one interviews.[17] On this basis I went on to interview ten History teachers and five RE teachers.[18] The interviews were more open-ended and informal than was possible with the questionnaires and lasted up to an hour. I had a basic set of questions and the same topics were covered in most interviews, but, due to the more informal nature of this part of the research, each interview was different. This type of research is a dynamic process and therefore ideas were generated during the interview process; in addition to this, some topics and questions were covered more by some teachers than others simply because of the time available for the interview and the teachers own experience, attitudes, enthusiasm and knowledge.

The other important reason for combining these two different types of data was methodological. Here it is necessary to take some note of current debates within the field of social research since the validity and reliability of any research

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[16] There are only transcripts for nine History interviews as one of the teachers I interviewed was not comfortable being recorded.
[17] It should be noted that given the time that passed between issuing the questionnaires and arranging the interviews, some of the questionnaire respondents were no longer available.
[18] I chose to interview more History teachers than RE teachers, because the Holocaust is compulsory within History.

findings depend largely upon the methods used during the investigation.[19] For many years researchers have made a distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative research is closely aligned with the scientific approach used in the natural sciences. The task for most quantitative researchers is to verify and confirm a particular theory by using the recognised linear model of developing a general theory, producing a hypothesis, conducting an experiment and then accepting or rejecting the original hypothesis. The language used for quantitative research also draws upon scientific terminology, for example; 'variables', 'controls', 'measurement' and 'experiments'. This type of social research is usually associated with surveys, questionnaires and controlled experiments. It is often described by its proponents as reliable, hard and rigorous, and as a result inherent precision is implied. As the conclusions reached using quantitative research methods are generally considered to be both rigorous and scientific, it is often presented as the more acceptable method of research, because the results can be generalised and it therefore provides the most likely means of eliciting change.[20]

The aim of quantitative research is to explain situations and events in general, from a detached and rational perspective. Theories and concepts are defined prior to the commencement of any investigation and as with the natural sciences, once the results have been analysed it is possible to determine general 'laws' and these in turn are considered replicable and therefore universal. This type of research is based on and largely reflects the aims and tenets of a positivism that proclaims the suitability of scientific methods to all forms of knowledge and the appropriateness of scientific procedures to the social sciences.[21] It argues that only observable phenomena can validly be called knowledge and that scientific knowledge is arrived at through an accumulation of facts. The objectivity of the scientists ensures that the conclusions remain valid.

The main criticisms of quantitative research methods are that the linear model is flawed, because as Alan Bryman points out:

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[19] This is a cursory examination of the current debates in order to clarify why I chose a particular form of research and data gathering. Debates on social research methodology are extremely complex and I have not attempted to provide a comprehensive study of these, as it would not be relevant here.

[20] An example of this can be seen in the way polls and social surveys are conducted as a measure of societal attitudes, for example, before a general election.

[21] For a full discussion on the philosophical history of quantitative research see Alan Bryman, Quantity and Quality in Social Research, (London: Routledge, 1988), chapter 2, pp. 11-44.

> The extent to which quantitative research is explicitly guided by theory has been questioned…theoretical reasoning often occurs towards the end of the research process… Indeed quantitative research is often much more exploratory and unpredictable in its outcome.[22]

Positivism specifically and quantitative methods generally are also criticised because they are unable to recognise either change, or the fallibility of observational research. The quantitative researcher offers a static view of social reality and the subject is studied in isolation. The emotional nature of subjects and the influence of surrounding factors such as community, morality, religion and personal relationships are ignored. Martyn Denscombe describes the limitations of a scientific approach as follows:

> There are certain realms where science *cannot* provide answers… when it comes to matters of religion we can see some boundaries to the application of science. Science, for its part, lays claim to expertise in the understanding of the 'material' things – the physical and natural world… By contrast, spiritual well-being, morality and the meaning of life are things upon which religion and philosophy continue to shed a light.[23]

The question raised from this is whether scientific methods, as used in the natural sciences, are appropriate or even applicable to studies concerned with social reality. In addition to this there are persuasive arguments that question the very possibility of true objectivity.[24]

Qualitative research is a more recent approach to the social sciences and was until recently used only for producing the foundation on which quantitative research methods could be based.[25] It became more popular as the concerns regarding quantitative methods described above became more widespread. Bryman describes the main characteristic of qualitative research as 'its express commitment to viewing events, actions, norms and values, etc. from the perspective of the people who are

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[22] Alan Bryan, Quantity and Quality, p.97.

[23] Martyn Denscombe, Ground Rules for Good Research, (Buckingham: OUP, 2002) p.16.

[24] The objectivity of a 'scientific' approach should not be assumed. Earl Babbie succinctly states the difficulties associated with claiming to be objective when he suggests that 'social research can never be totally objective, since researchers are humanly subjective.' See E. Babbie, The Practice of Social Research, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 8th Edition, 1998) p 450. Max Weber addressed this in 1904 in his paper entitled 'Objectivity in Social Science' in which he stated that 'there is no absolutely "objective" scientific analysis of culture or… social phenomena,' quoted in, Gerard Delanty and Piet Strydon, (eds.) Philosophies of Social Science The Classic and Contemporary Readings, (Maidenhead: OUP, 2003) pp. 107-120, p. 111.

[25] Alan Bryman describes the changes and trends of qualitative research methods in his introduction to Quantity and Quality. He also discusses the opinions regarding the role of this type of research in chapter 5, pp, 93-126.

being studied.'[26] The emphasis is on the way the subject understands and interprets his or her personal social reality, and researchers aim to empathise with the subject to the extent that they are able to view the social reality as though they are the subject.

Qualitative research is sometimes presented as the exact opposite of quantitative research and as such avoids all the pitfalls associated with quantitative methods. Theories and concepts are developed from within the research and they are defined by the subject rather than being pre-determined or imposed at the outset. This allows for issues the subject considers important to be included as part of the research and because no prior frameworks are imposed, issues can be raised at anytime without having a detrimental effect on the overall project. This method also allows for theories and concepts to be reconsidered in light of the research findings. The researcher can discard or redirect theories and concepts as appropriate and without constraint.

Typically the methods associated with this type of research are participant observation and open-ended, in-depth interviewing. Qualitative methods are described as rich, deep and attentive to detail. They provide a description of the subject or phenomenon being studied in the context of the social structures which surround, interact and influence it. Babbie provides a useful description of this approach, which also highlights the differences between the quantitative and qualitative approaches:

> A social researcher might ask whether you tend to date people older or younger than yourself. A quantitative answer to this seems easily attained. The researcher asks how old each of your dates has been, calculates an average, and sees whether it's older or younger than you. Case closed.
>
> Or is it? While "age" here represents the number of years people have been alive, sometimes people use the term differently; perhaps for some "age" really means "maturity"... Or someone might see "age" as how young or old your dates look or maybe the degree of variation in their life experiences... In addition to greater detail, qualitative data seem richer in meaning than quantified data. This is implicit in the cliché, "He is older than his years." The somewhat poetic meaning of this expression would be lost in attempts to specify *how much* older.[27]

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative researchers are concerned with the specific and individual. For this reason qualitative research findings are considered to be valid rather than reliable. The results of qualitative research cannot be so

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[26] Ibid., p. 61.
[27] Earl Babbie, The Practice of Social Research, pp. 36-37.

easily transposed or generalised as they relate specifically to the subject in question. In contrast to the static image of society presented by the quantitative researcher, qualitative methods view social life as dynamic, shaped and influenced by a stream of interconnecting events.

The main criticisms of qualitative research relate to interpretation. It is questionable whether researchers can provide accounts, as though through the eyes of the subjects, without imposing at least some of their own personal perceptions. There has, after all, to be a degree of input from the researcher in order to provide description or derive meaning. In addition to this problem, it would be entirely possible for qualitative researchers to draw different conclusions when researching the same subject. There has in the past been a tendency to view these two approaches as opposing methodological paradigms, because each research method is associated with one paradigmatic stance and by adopting one research method rather than another, the researcher is accepting the whole philosophical package associated with it. Researchers, in theory at least, are limited to the adoption and application of either quantitative or qualitative methods. According to more recent discussions on social research methodology, it does not seem wholly necessary or desirable to treat the two as mutually exclusive models.[28]

If the main barrier to accepting the usefulness and validity of both methods is the assumption that they are based on fundamentally incompatible epistemological positions, then this can be avoided by accepting that each method is suitable for a different purpose. For example, if it is agreed that quantitative methods are best suited for the examination of structural regularities in social life and qualitative methods are best suited for providing access to the processes involved, then both positions can be afforded equal worth. The end result of this would be a more complete study offering a 'three dimensional' image of the subject or phenomenon being studied. However, in the past qualitative research methods have only been used in the early stages of research as a tool for highlighting potential hypotheses. This has resulted in the unnecessary subjugation of qualitative methods together with acceptance of the underlying assumption that these methods are inadequate in their own right and in need of additional, quantitative verification.

Assuming then that the two methods can be used to fortify rather than

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[28] For a discussion of how the two approaches can be combined and compared, see Alan Bryman, Quantity and Quality, chapters 6 and 7.

discredit one another, it is possible to avoid the theoretical debates on epistemological positions and adopt a position whereby the most suitable method for the purpose of the investigation is used.[29] This is a position described by Babbie as follows: 'both qualitative and quantitative methods are useful and legitimate in social research. Some research situations and topics are most amenable to qualitative examination, others to quantification.'[30]

Adopting a combined approach is extremely important for my own research. Firstly, because as stated above a combination of the two will produce a more complete picture, and will allow different facets of the same subject to be studied. Secondly, because the nature of my own research already demands a combined approach. The National Curriculum and government policy dictate the format and content for teaching the subject in schools, therefore to a large extent my working hypothesis has already been established (a trait of quantitative research). Questionnaire surveys of a range of schools further reinforce the quantitative approach to data. However, it is highly likely that the practice of teachers differs from that which is prescribed by the government given the highly contested and emotionally charged nature of a subject such as the Holocaust. In addition to this, the teaching process is inherently dynamic, constantly evolving and subject to individual interpretation. This therefore calls for qualitative research methods to be employed. These considerations also apply to the quantitative data gained from the questionnaires which gave rise to a range of impressions and questions requiring further exploration in in-depth interviews.

By utilising both research techniques, but putting most emphasis on a smaller scale qualitative approach, I hope to avoid the naivety of a purely quantitative approach and to allow for an examination of the specific impact and influence policy can have, in effect examining the practice as well as the theory. The research model I intend to use is as follows:

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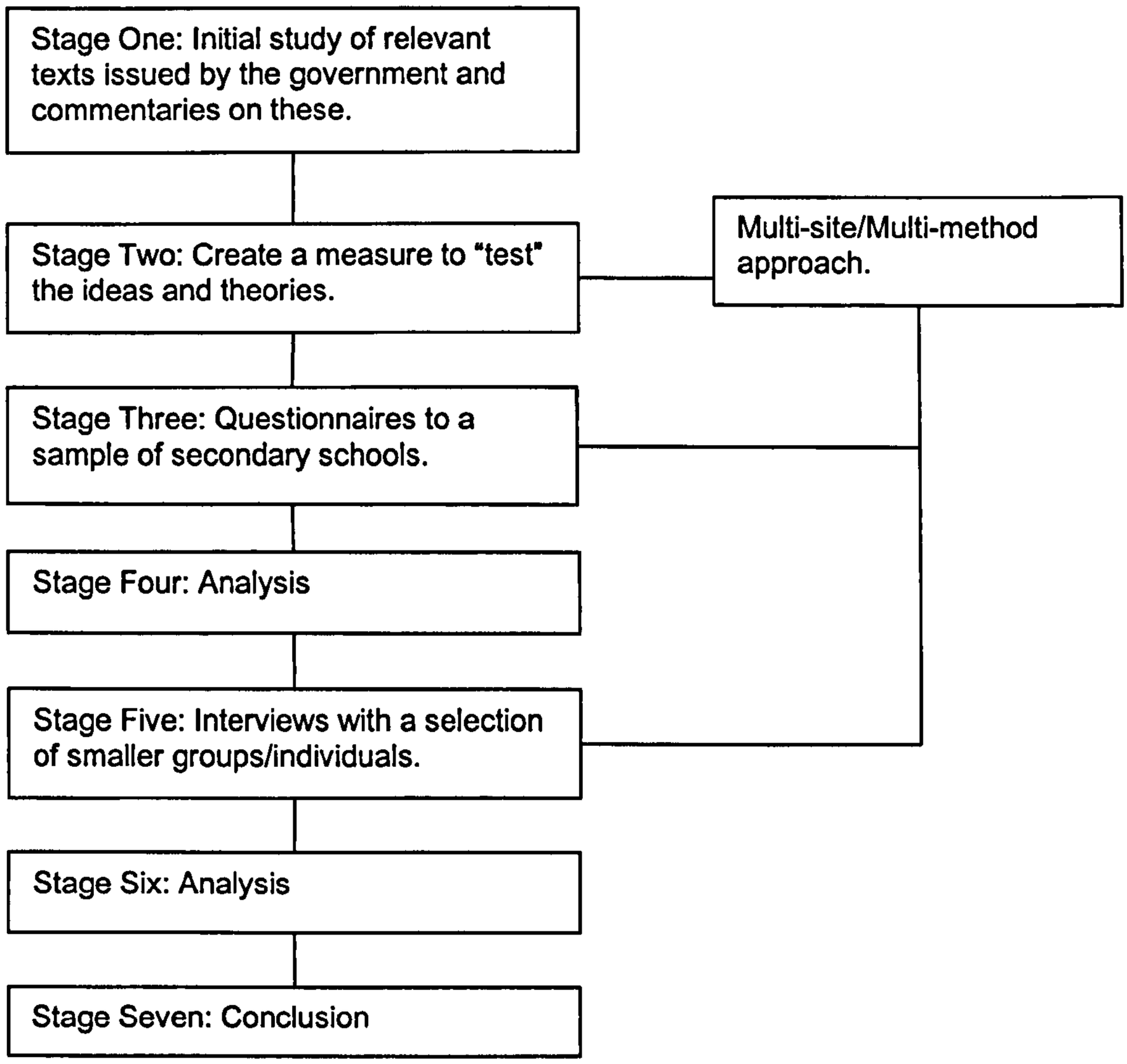
[29] Arguments supporting a combined approach are considered by Neil Spicer, 'Combining qualitative and quantitative methods', in Clive Searle (ed.), Researching Society and Culture, (London: Sage, 2nd ed. 2004), pp. 294-303.
[30] Earl Babbie, The Practice of Social Research, p. 38.



By using a multi-site and multi-method approach I will be able to examine the static and the dynamic, the policy and the response of those that are responsible for implementing, understanding and receiving it. By beginning the research using quantitative methods, I can investigate the place of the Holocaust in contemporary thought and the history, aims and application of the National Curriculum. The initial quantitative research will establish the general foundation, which can then be built upon and tested. This will provide a 'picture' of the current situation and it will highlight potential issues that can be pursued using qualitative methods. The qualitative research stage (stage five) aims to explore practice and attitudes in-depth. This process can also guard against the imposition of an initial set of assumptions upon the research without the possibility of subsequently correcting it in the light of the evidence. As my conclusions will indicate, this turned out to be a necessary corrective in the case of my own work.

One further methodological decision concerning the collection of data requires some comment. I did not attempt to take the research one stage further by

attempting to assess the attitudes and understanding of pupils themselves, although evidence of this does emerge from the comments of teachers. This was partly because of the technical difficulties involved in undertaking research in the field of educational psychology, partly because Burke has already undertaken a detailed research project in this area, but mainly because the focus of my theological critique is upon the aims and methods of those engaged at national and local level in Holocaust teaching. This limitation does not imply that I regard the impact of such policies on pupils as of secondary importance.

The penultimate chapter assesses the teaching of Holocaust education from a Christian theological perspective. It begins by discussing a number of contemporary debates concerning the nature and purpose of religious education in schools and the place of theology within such a framework. It then goes on to address separately the teaching of the Holocaust within the History syllabus applying insights derived from political theology to argue a case for what kind of history teaching ought to be promoted. Finally, it looks at the teaching of the Holocaust within the Religious Education syllabus arguing that it is legitimate and indeed important to maintain the teaching of the subject in the future if it is undertaken from a self-consciously critical perspective. The argument concludes by considering what kind of teaching would fulfil this aim and the extent to which it would be compatible with a Christian faith commitment. In my conclusion I shall sum up the results of my research in schools and consider the fundamental question of whether the Holocaust deserves its place in the secondary school curricula.

Chapter Two: The Holocaust in Contemporary Scholarship and Popular Consciousness

The Broad Picture

The aim of this chapter is to discuss a number of important developments that have taken place in Holocaust studies in recent years. My intention is partly to contextualize the teaching of the subject in schools by examining intellectual trends that seem likely to have important implications for the way the pedagogic task is carried out. At the same time I want to examine the extent to which issues raised by scholars have impacted upon public perceptions of the Holocaust since there is some evidence to suggest that for teachers of the subject in schools this may be the means by which their thinking about the subject is changed. For example, in 2001 the journal Teaching History devoted a special edition to the teaching of the Holocaust in British schools and articles written by a broad range of secondary teachers drew upon the work of leading academics in the field in order to justify their own teaching practices.[1] In my empirical research I will later assess how far in practice recent scholarly concerns have impacted on classroom teaching amongst the teachers I interviewed.

In very broad terms it is possible to suggest that the heroic age of historical research into the causes and nature of the Holocaust began in the early 1960s and ended in the late 1980s.[2] Although the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the opening up of hitherto unexplored archival sources have continued to provide historians with important new material, it seems unlikely that the broad findings of earlier historical research will be substantially changed. What was achieved by scholars during this period was the creation of a complex and in many ways uncomfortable picture of the traumatic events of the years from 1933 to 1945. Earlier assumptions about the limited number of those who could be implicated in the killing of the Jews were replaced by an understanding of the way in which the actions of large numbers of individuals ranging from doctors, civil servants, businessmen and academics to ordinary neighbours of the Jews in many European countries, made mass murder

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[1] Teaching History, vol. 104, September, 2001. Scholars cited by teachers included Tim Cole, Norman Finkelstein and Peter Novick.

[2] The beginning of this phase of historical scholarship can best be dated from the publication of the first edition of Raul Hilberg's monumental study The Destruction of the European Jews in 1961.

possible.[3] At the same time, research into Nazi ideology and other less well-known victims of the regime suggested that not only anti-Semitism, but also a kind of dystopian belief in the creation of a perfect society by means of murderous eugenic cleansing was a key feature of the Holocaust.[4]

The complexity of this picture of the Holocaust that has emerged from the archival work of historians is likely to have created problems for teachers in a school setting, but these, I would argue, have been exacerbated by contemporary preoccupations with questions of methodology. In recent years research into the Holocaust has become increasingly reflective and interpretations of the significance of the Holocaust historian's work more contested even though the impact and influence of the Holocaust on western thought, society, culture and politics has not diminished. Three aspects of this increasing self-consciousness deserve some discussion even though they may not turn out to be of equal importance in the classroom: firstly the impact of postmodernism; secondly the awareness of a disjunction between history and popular memory; and thirdly the politicisation of Holocaust studies.

Postmodernism and the Holocaust

Unsurprisingly, the study of the Holocaust has not remained isolated from more general debates about the nature of History as an academic subject. The intention of postmodernist theory has been to cast doubt upon not only the reliability of historical methods as traditionally practised by historians, but upon the coherence of the notion of historical objectivity itself. The distinguished critic and philosopher Hayden White traces this scepticism back to Roland Barthes' 1967 essay 'The Discourse of History' where Barthes argues that 'historical discourse is in its essence a form of ideological elaboration, or to put it more precisely, an imaginary elaboration'.[5]

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[3] Important works include P. Hayes, Industry and Ideology: I. G. Farben in the Nazi Era, (Cambridge: CUP, 1987); R. Proctor, Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988); D. Bankier, The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992); C. Browning, Ordinary Men: Reserve police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution, (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

[4] The best overview of this topic is M. Burleigh & W. Wippermann, The Racial State: Germany 1933-45, (Cambridge: CUP, 1991).

[5] H. White, The Content and the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 36.

In the British context, the arguments of continental theorists have been popularised in a form accessible to both historians and teachers by Keith Jenkins who not only describes, but also advocates, a postmodernist understanding of the past:

> It can and has supported countless plausible and, vis-à-vis their own methodological lights, equally legitimate histories; it has unfailingly given whatever historians (and their impersonators) have wanted and want: various births, origins, legitimating antecedents, explanations and lines of descent (Tory, Whig, Marxist etc.) useful for them as they try to be in control, so that they can make the past their past and so say, along with Nietzsche, 'So I willed it.'
>
> Today more people than ever are willing things. In the wake of those absent centres and collapsed metanarratives, so the conditions of post-modernism have produced that multitude of histories that can be met everywhere throughout the democratic/consumerising culture, a mass of genres (designer/niche histories) to be variously used and/or abused.[6]

How influential has this kind of questioning of historical objectivity been within the British educational context? Jenkins' work has provoked a sharp rejoinder from the historian Richard Evans who is perhaps more typical of the British historical community when he argues that:

> It is right and proper that postmodernist theorists and critics should force historians to rethink the categories and assumptions with which they work, and to justify the manner in which they practise their discipline. But post modernism is itself one group of theories among many, and as contestable as all the rest. For my own part, I remain optimistic that objective historical knowledge is both desirable and attainable.[7]

Although it is true that the teaching of History in schools at GCSE level has undergone a significant change in recent years from a concentration on the acquisition of facts to the analysis of texts and their interpretation, it is unlikely that this owes much to the thinking of postmodernist thinkers such as Foucault and Barthes or the acceptance by teachers of their theories about what Jenkins calls 'epistemological fragility'.[8] Hard-pressed teachers are not likely to further complicate an already difficult subject at secondary school level by the introduction of such sophisticated perspectives.

Another source of resistance to embracing postmodern perspectives may lie in the nature of the Holocaust as a topic. It is interesting to note that Evans has further

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[6] K. Jenkins, Rethinking History, (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 65. Jenkins' final comment about the use or abuse of postmodernist historical genres makes it clear that he is not an advocate of total historical relativism.
[7] R. J. Evans, In Defence of History, (London: Granta Books, revised ed., 1997), p. 252.
[8] Jenkins, Rethinking, p. 11.

bolstered his reputation as one of the foremost opponents of postmodernist theory as applied to the practice of History by his recent appearance as an expert defence witness in the libel action brought by the right-wing historian David Irving against Penguin Books and the historian Deborah Lipstadt who accused Irving of defending Hitler by falsifying facts about the Holocaust. It is clear from the judge's comments in the trial that Evans's appeal to what constituted objective facts in a court of law was decisive for the defence case.[9] Because of the moral enormity of the Holocaust both popular and scholarly opinion is likely to be at its most resistant here to the epistemological relativism advocated by some postmodernist theorists. This is borne out by the comments of Richard Rubenstein and John Roth in the latest edition of their highly respected study Approaches to Auschwitz where they refer to Michael Berenbaum's suggestion that the Holocaust has become for our society a kind of 'negative absolute':

> In our pluralistic world, where cultural, religious and philosophical perspectives vary considerably, many people believe that values are so relative to one's time and place that the "truth" of moral claims is much more a result of subjective preference and political power than a function of objective reality and universal reason. That relativistic outlook meets resistance in the Holocaust, for there is a widely shared belief that the Holocaust was *wrong*, or nothing could be.[10]

Yet we should not too readily dismiss the impact of postmodernism on the study and teaching of the Holocaust. In general terms the increasing awareness of the extent to which the historian's conclusions are influenced by his or her intellectual and social situatedness has impacted upon the way in which the subject is now being portrayed. It might also be suggested that this climate of sceptical self-awareness has influenced the two other issues that I will now consider: the debate over history and memory and the politicisation of the subject.

History, Memory and the Holocaust

Over the past few years there has been a growing interest within historiography about the relationship between history conceived of as the work undertaken by professional historians and the popular or collective memory of the past that circulates within a society at a given time. The conceptualisation of these

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[9] See D. Lipstadt, Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory, (London: Penguin Books, 1994). For the trial itself see, R. J. Evans, Telling Lies about Hitler: The Holocaust, History and the David Irving Trial, (London: Verso, 2002).

[10] R. Rubenstein & J. K. Roth, Approaches to Auschwitz. The Holocaust and its Legacy, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, revised ed., 2003), p. 368. They go on to argue that this expectation of what can be learned from the study of the Shoah is not without its problems.

issues is generally traced back to the work of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs whose book On Collective Memory was first published in 1922.[11] Halbwachs carefully distinguished between autobiographical memory (that which we as individuals experience of the past); historical memory (that which we experience through historical records); and collective memory, which gives social groups within society their sense of identity. As his English editor points out for Halbwachs, 'collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present'.[12] Moreover not only is collective memory essentially unstable over time, it is also within any one society plural since shared memories can act as points of reference for different social groups.

What has understandably interested historians about these theoretical perspectives is the way in which they problematise the relationship between their own archival work and publications and popular perceptions of the past.[13] Two topics in particular have been the focus for research informed by this critical perspective. The first is the history of remembrance. This is partly because, given the scale of mass slaughter in the wars of the twentieth century, acts of remembrance have played a prominent part in the social history of the period. It is also because public forms of remembrance provide particularly clear and well-documented examples of the way in which the meanings of past events are contested and liable to change under the pressure of changing social needs.[14] The second topic has been the Holocaust since this not only serves to illustrate the issue of remembrance of the dead, but also provides particularly vivid examples of the way in which historical interpretations of the event are subject to the pressures of contemporary social groups and national self-definitions.[15]

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[11] Maurice Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, (ed.) Lewis A. Coser, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992). Halbwachs died in Buchenwald. For a good overview of the growing scholarly interest in collective memory see J. K. Olick & J. Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices', in The Annual Review of Sociology, 1998, pp. 105-140. See too, P. Connerton, How Societies Remember, (Cambridge: CUP, 1989).

[12] Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, p. 34.

[13] An entire journal, History and Memory has been devoted to these issues. For a discussion of the problems by a working historian, see D. Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country, (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

[14] For this subject see J. Winter & E. Sivan, War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century, (Cambridge: CUP, 1999).

[15] For an outstanding discussion of this topic see G. Hartman (ed.), Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994). Also illuminating is C. Wiedmer, The Claims of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). From a more literary and psychoanalytical perspective see D. LaCapra, Representing the Holocaust: History, Memory Trauma, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). For a theological discussion that makes use of the concept of collective memory see K. Holtschneider, German Protestants Remember the Holocaust, (Munster: Lit Verlag, 2001).

One other theme that has emerged from recent discussions of popular and collective memory deserves to be highlighted, since it has a direct bearing on Holocaust teaching in schools. Whereas the input into collective memory was once more limited and more amenable to control by government through forms of ritualised remembrance and public memorials, the growth of television, film, and the internet now means that a range of powerful media resources help to shape public awareness of the Holocaust. The implications of these developments for understanding Auschwitz are put at their bleakest by the French cultural critic Jean Baudrillard:

> We forget a little too easily that the whole of our reality is filtered through the media, including tragic events of the past. This means that it is too late to verify and understand those events historically, for the characteristic thing about the present period, the present *fin de siècle*, is the fact that the tools required for such intelligibility have been lost... These things were never understood while we still had the means to understand them. Now they never will be. They never will be because such basic notions as responsibility, objective causes, or the meaning of history (or lack thereof) have disappeared, or are in the process of disappearing. The moral or social conscience is now a phenomenon entirely governed by the media, and the therapeutic zeal applied to its resuscitation is itself an index of how little wind it has left.[16]

But even without subscribing to Baudrillard's extreme pessimism, a number of historians and cultural critics have drawn attention to the way in which media representations of the Holocaust have been extremely influential in shaping popular consciousness in ways that are often at variance with the work of historians. One of these is the British historian Tim Cole in his book Images of the Holocaust: The 'Myth' of the Shoah Business, a critical study of the way that the Holocaust is represented in Europe, America and Israel. He concludes that: 'At the end of the twentieth century... the "Holocaust" is a desirable icon and... contested brand name.'[17]

When Cole refers to the 'myth of the Holocaust', he is not primarily concerned with Holocaust deniers nor seeking to fundamentally challenge the aims and methods of professional historians, rather he is emphasising the difference between the historical event and the subsequent representations of that event. These representations often reveal more about the present social and political climate than about the past that they claim to portray. To illustrate this point, Cole uses the examples of three people; Anne Frank, Adolf Eichmann and Oskar Schindler and

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[16] J. Baudrillard, The Transparency of Evil. Essays on Extreme Phenomenon, translated by James Benedict, (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 90-91. The French original appeared in 1990.
[17] T. Cole, Images of the Holocaust: The Myth of the 'Shoah Business' (London: Duckworth, 1999), p. 177.

three places: Auschwitz, Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.

In the case of Anne Frank, Cole claims that she has gained iconic status and her diary has become *the* Holocaust text. However, the process by which this occurred was not as simple as the importance of the diary being recognised by a publisher and subsequently by audiences world-wide. There is evidence that the diary was edited to make her the perfect victim. When, for example, the book was exported to the United States the contents were also changed and some references to Judaism and Jews removed so that its lesson was more universal in nature and therefore more appealing to an American audience. For Americans, learning about Anne Frank became *the* way to learn about wider human rights issues. Cole concludes that:

> Anne Frank's 'distorted' diary stands at the end of the twentieth century as *the* 'Holocaust bible', and 'Anne Frank' stands as *the* 'Holocaust victim'. Stripped of her burgeoning sexuality – through her father's judicious editing – this 'Anne Frank' is the ideal symbol of the 'innocent victim and the ideal symbol of potential snuffed out.[18]

The perception and understanding of Anne Frank and her diary has changed, particularly over the last twenty years, with the Jewish-ness being re-inserted and the context of the Holocaust being reaffirmed. This has resulted in what Cole describes as a layering effect, where the particularity exists together with the universal. The implication is that further layers could of course be added if the social and political climate called for it.

Cole makes similar observations with regard to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Israel. The museum represents the Holocaust from a perspective relevant to its social and political settings: 'the site reflects the official telling of the Holocaust past'[19]. Visitors are introduced to the Holocaust with examples of heroism and resistance, in line with contemporary Israeli state ideology. Thus the Avenue of the Righteous leads to the memorial to the Warsaw ghetto fighters. As Cole puts it, Yad Vashem from its conception was to be 'as much about 'heroism' as it was about 'martyrdom'.[20] This is in contrast to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. which reinforces and embodies America's democratic ideals within its displays. Isabel Wollaston makes the same point in her discussion of the

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[18] Ibid., p. 46.
[19] Ibid., p. 124.
[20] Ibid., p. 122.

role of museums in moulding popular consciousness arguing that: 'The variety of motivations for remembering the Holocaust is reflected in the diversity or memorials, and the explanations given for building them.'[21] For example:

> Memorials in Israel focus upon the motifs of 'Martyrs and Heroes', 'Holocaust and Heroism': the emphasis is upon the Holocaust as the culmination of the Diaspora existence, and proof of the need for a strong, independent Jewish state. In Poland, the emphasis is either upon loss and dislocation... or the Holocaust is seen as a figure for the suffering of the Polish nation.[22]

Her conclusion in line with Cole's is that:

> Memorializing the Holocaust has become highly politicised... What is already apparent is that the politics of commemoration is highly selective: what is remembered, and where, does not always happen 'naturally', and often it depends upon the intervention of influential individuals or groups.[23]

However, we also need to be aware, she cautions against Cole and other social theorists of collective memory, of the fact that contingent factors may play a large part in the creation of museums and memorials. This is true for example of Auschwitz which has become the ultimate symbol of the Holocaust:

> There are a number of reasons why Auschwitz has emerged as *the* symbol of the Holocaust. It is partly due to the number of survivors compared with, for example, Chelmno, where there were only two. It stems in part from Auschwitz's international character: Jews were deported to Auschwitz from all over Europe... In addition the camp was liberated largely intact. As a consequence there is something for visitors to see... Proximity to Krakow has also helped Auschwitz emerge as a major centre of pilgrimage and tourism.[24]

This view of the impact of political and social pressures on Holocaust remembrance, is also shared by Raul Hilberg who writes that:

> Topics may be suppressed or catapulted to public attention, but always for reasons that reflect the problems and needs of a society. In the United States the phenomenon now known as the Holocaust did not take root until after the agonies of the Vietnam war, when a new generation of Americans was searching for moral certainties, and when the Holocaust became a marker of an absolute evil against which all other transgressions in the conduct of nations could be measured and assessed.[25]

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[21] Isabel Wollaston, A War Against Memory? The Future of Holocaust Rembrance, (London: SPCK, 1996), pp. 35-36.
[22] Ibid., p. 38.
[23] Ibid., p.45. For a more detailed examination of Holocaust politics and Auschwitz, see Isabel Wollaston, Auschwitz and the Politics of Commemoration, (London: The Holocaust Educational Trust, 2000).
[24] Isabel Wollaston, Auschwitz and the Politics of Commemoration, p. 9.
[25] Raul Hilberg, The Politics of Memory. The Journey of a Holocaust Historian, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), p. 123.

For Cole it is in America rather than Israel where the myth of the Holocaust can best be seen, because: 'America has embraced the "Holocaust". It is seemingly everywhere.'[26] In America's Holocaust museum, examples of tolerance and racism abound and America's role as the worlds 'policeman' is reinforced with references to its inactivity during the Holocaust. Cole attributes the differences between the two museums to the national attitude of the country doing the remembering towards the Holocaust:

> In many ways a sense of shame about the 'Holocaust' is perhaps the key to understanding this uniquely Israeli linking of 'destruction and heroism.' Whereas in America – and to a lesser extent in Europe – there is no shame in the 'destruction' (someone else's destruction), in Israel there is.[27]

He argues that there is a definite tendency to draw a range of positive, redemptive conclusions from the Holocaust. This is particularly clear in the case of the success of the Hollywood film Schindler's List which, as he points out, whilst not minimizing the horrors of the death camps, chose to focus on one of the few instances involving the rescue of Jewish inmates of Auschwitz. He concludes:

> And this, I think, is the attraction of the myth of the 'Holocaust' to the contemporary world. The 'Holocaust' past is one to which a multitude of meanings can be attributed, and one from which a multitude of lessons can be drawn.[28]

As meanings are subject to change, Cole believes that:

> The reality at the end of the twentieth century, is that the myth of the Holocaust is a complex mixture of historically and geographically situated narratives and meanings which have accumulated over the course of the last five decades in Europe, Israel and the United States.[29]

It is important to emphasise again that Cole is not here engaging in a post-modernist attack on the notion of historical objectivity. He has himself published traditional works of historical scholarship in this field. It is precisely the gap between this kind of work and popular understandings of the Holocaust that he finds problematic. These problems arise when representations, presented as facts, do not

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[26] Tim Cole, Images of the Holocaust, p. 147.
[27] Ibid., p. 133.
[28] Ibid., p. 173.
[29] Ibid., p. 177.

acknowledge their own limitations.[30] Issues regarding ownership, the 'Americanisation' of the Holocaust, political manipulation and misuse of Holocaust imagery are highlighted by Cole's examination of the Holocaust 'Myth'. He argues that all representations, whether it is those in Europe, America or Israel are incomplete: 'representations by definition are historically situated, and therefore partial.'[31] As such, it is necessary to recognise that: 'engaging with the 'myth' is rather different from engaging with the reality... The critical distinction between the two tends to be neither stressed by the heritage industry nor picked up on by the increasing numbers of "Holocaust tourists".'[32]

This failure to see museums as tourist attractions, rather than sacred sites, and films as forms of entertainment, rather than works of historical integrity, is, according to Cole, playing into the hands of Holocaust deniers, because they tend to blur the critical distinction between reality and representation.[33] Paradoxically he suggests that in a very real sense it is this 'myth of the Holocaust' that deniers are attacking: 'denying the Holocaust is primarily a product of present concerns, rather than an engagement with the past.'[34] Nor is this type of damaging reaction to the Holocaust confined to Holocaust deniers. Raul Hilberg in his autobiographical work The Politics of Memory, describes the fervent and sometimes vicious attacks he was subjected to when his less than flattering conclusions about the behaviour of some Holocaust victims were read by the Jewish community. He states that: 'I had underestimated the importance of myths.'[35]

Challengingly, Cole concludes from his examination of contemporary collective memories that: 'our contemporary obsession with the 'Holocaust' may not simply be doing us less good than we often claim. It may actually be doing us harm.'[36] Isabel Wollaston shares many of his concerns, but comes to a more optimistic - or perhaps more pragmatic - conclusion:

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[30] For further discussion of this see Robert Braun's article; 'The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation', History and Theory 33 (1994), pp. 172-197. Braun concludes "As far as debates on problems of historical consciousness, historical judgement and interpretation of the National Socialist past in Germany are concerned, [I] have attempted to show that the representation of past "reality" is closely connected to problems that lie outside the sphere of purely scholarly activity. Problems of historical representation are politically and socially significant in the individual and communal search for legitimation - the past, it seems is granted its own legitimation by the authority of the present.'

[31] Cole, Images, p. 183.

[32] Ibid., p. 185.

[33] Ibid., p. 187.

[34] Ibid., p. 187.

[35] Raul Hilberg, The Politics of Memory, p. 127.

[36] Tim Cole, Images, p. 188.

> Given the nature of many representations of the Holocaust, it is perhaps understandable that there is a preference expressed in some quarters for a respectful silence. However, in view of the current situation, this is no longer a serious option. Rather than condemn all popular representations of the Holocaust, we need to ask why it is that they, rather than more 'authentic' responses have succeeded in capturing the public's interest... In many cases it is the initial interest generated by popular representations that creates sufficient interest for some of the audience to pursue other, perhaps less easily accessible approaches to the Holocaust. Ideally the two approaches will have a symbiotic relationship: the former generating interest in the latter.[37]

In this she may prove to be right, but it is also interesting to note that several of the works Cole discusses to substantiate his thesis, most notably Anne Frank's Diary and the film Schindler's List, are amongst material often used in schools in the teaching of the Holocaust. The issues that he raises will therefore form part of the enquiry in the next chapter.

The Politicisation of the Holocaust

Whilst the interpretations of the Holocaust I have so far been discussing in this chapter depend upon what are often highly intellectualised questions of methodology and as such may not be thought to impinge too directly upon the teaching of the subject at secondary school level, the same is less true of the often very public rows that have erupted over attempts to politicise the study and teaching of the Holocaust. We need of course at this point to define what is meant by politicisation. One broad dictionary definition of politics is that it is: 'an activity whereby solutions to social and economic problems are solved and different aspirations are met by the process of discussion and compromise rather than by the application of decree or force.' However, a shorter and more focussed definition may have greater relevance for this study, whereby politics is defined as: 'manoeuvring for power etc within a group'.[38] In his discussion of what constitutes Holocaust politics the American historian John Roth picks up on this definition. For him politics is an unavoidable and necessary aspect of human existence involving three activities: believing, governing and manoeuvring. In this third case the term politics 'emphasizes strategies devised to advance special interests and tactics employed to serve particular constituencies'.[39] Roth's point is that the study and teaching of the Holocaust are never simply attempts at value-free retrieval of the past but are influenced by the often conflicting needs and policies of those engaged in Holocaust remembrance. In what follows I shall explore the implications of Roth's argument by

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[37] Wollaston, A War Against Memory? pp. 60-61.
[38] The Hutchinson Dictionary of Ideas, (Oxford: Helicon, 1994), p. 416.
[39] J. K. Roth, Holocaust Politics, (Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2001), pp. 4-5.

commentating on several pertinent issues: the nomenclature applied to the Holocaust; the debates over its supposed uniqueness; and finally the debates that have taken place in England over the wisdom of creating a specific Holocaust Memorial Day.

Defining the Holocaust

The most widely accepted general definition of the term Holocaust is that advanced by the distinguished Jewish historian Yehuda Bauer: 'The Holocaust is the name now customarily used in English for the planned total annihilation of the Jewish people, and the actual murder of six million of them at the hands of the Nazis.'[40] Popular acceptance of this definition can be surmised from the fact that few writers feel the need to qualify the term Holocaust with the prefix 'Jewish'. Rubenstein and Roth slightly modify this understanding in their discussion of terminology in their book Approaches to Auschwitz, but retain the essential thrust of Bauer's position when they suggest that the term Holocaust is understood to refer 'not exclusively, but primarily – to the Nazi destruction of the European Jews.'[41]

However, The Oxford English Dictionary charts the more complex evolution of the term, from its original meaning of, 'a sacrifice wholly consumed by fire; a whole burnt offering', through several further stages before it reaches Bauer's modern usage:

1. Complete sacrifice or offering.
2. A sacrifice on a large scale.
3. Complete consumption by fire, or that, which is so, consumed.
4. complete destruction esp. of a large number of persons; a great slaughter or massacre.
5. The Holocaust: the mass murder of the Jews by the Nazis in the war of 1939-1945. Also used... [in relation to] the similar fate of other groups.[42]

The first two definitions originate from the Hebrew Bible's concept of a voluntary sacrifice made to God (the OED refers to the sacrifice of Isaac in Exodus). Given these highly charged origins and connotations, for many academics using the

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[40] Y. Bauer, 'The Place of the Holocaust in Contemporary History', in J. K. Roth and M. Berenbaum, (eds.), The Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications, (New York: Paragon House, 1989), pp. 16-45, 16.
[41] R. Rubenstein & J. K. Roth, Approaches to Auschwitz , p. 4.
[42] Oxford English Dictionary, volume vii, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd edition, 1989), p. 315. For a more detailed discussion of the meaning and use of the term 'Holocaust', see Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, 'Why do we call the Holocaust "the Holocaust?" An Enquiry into the Psychology of Labels', Modern Judaism (1989), pp. 197-211.

term Holocaust has created both theological and moral dilemmas. To equate the voluntary sacrifice of the Hebrew Bible with the murderous regime of the Nazi death camps has been found unacceptable to many Jewish scholars who prefer the Hebrew word Shoah meaning disaster or catastrophe. Clearly words matter and as Omer Bartov argues, there are both conscious and unconscious decisions made when the term Holocaust is used, precisely because of its religious origins and connotations. He suggests that: 'In a society such as that of the United States, where the secular and the religious are so closely intertwined, Holocaust means sacrifice, God, purpose. The Jews [were] sacrificed for the good of humanity.'[43] Rubenstein and Roth reinforce Bartov's point by unintentionally revealing the way in which definitions are often fraught with emotional language:

> The Holocaust, then, means Final Solution and "catastrophe". Strictly speaking, it neither begins nor ends with Jews... and yet Jewish particularity remains at the centre of this story. Their sacrifices, as a people and as individuals, show what the scope of human conduct can be, even as they prod us to ask; what is worth living and dying for?[44]

The emotive sweep of this language makes the possibility of challenging its definition of the Holocaust very difficult. Reference is made to the victims 'sacrifices', and it is spelled out that there are inherent moral lessons 'worth living and dying for' contained in their histories. The seemingly timeless scale, magnitude and inexplicability of what is at stake are emphasised - 'it neither begins nor ends with Jews'. Either to question this definition or to ask for greater clarity and specificity can appear both petty and morally insensitive.

The way in which this definition has almost entirely superseded earlier uses of the term is poignantly illustrated in an anecdote by the pioneering Jewish historian of the Holocaust, Raul Hilberg, which captures the process as it takes wing:

> I recall another occasion when one of the earliest Holocaust conferences was held... One visitor, an elderly person perhaps nearing eighty years of age, sat there quietly for three days. I wondered who he was. Since he had a name tag and since there was also a book display, I could search for a book he might have written. I found one. It was an autobiographical work about the battle of Verdun, which had taken place in the First World War, and the book was titled *Holocaust*. It may not be said that he was not entitled to the use of this word. Yet among man-made disasters, such as purges, massacres and wars, the Holocaust is a novel marker in history.[45]

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[43] Omer Bartov, Murder in our Midst the Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation, (Oxford: OUP, 1996), p. 58.
[44] R. Rubenstein & J. K. Roth, Approaches to Auschwitz, p. 7.
[45] Raul Hilberg, 'I Was Not There', in Berel Lang, (ed.), Writing and the Holocaust, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), p. 17.

While the term Holocaust may be used legitimately to refer to other events, for Hilberg 'the Holocaust [meaning the Jewish Holocaust] is a novel marker', implying something new and qualitatively different. The emphasis here is on the Jews as victims, although Hilberg points out that 'there were thousands of others'.[46] The question remains as to whether these were or were not victims of the Holocaust. Are there boundaries that cannot be crossed with regards to defining the term Holocaust and for whom and on what grounds? What most critics of this definition of the Holocaust find most problematic is clearly stated by Carrie Supple - its exclusivity:

> Today, most people define the Holocaust as the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis and their helpers during the Second World War (1939-1945)... But there were thousands of other people gassed and burned with them, including half a million Gypsies... Millions of Soviet prisoners-of-war... Poles, communists, trade unionists, gays, disabled people, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics and anti-Nazis from all over Europe.[47]

In his recent discussion on the state of Holocaust studies, Bauer has returned to the problem of definition with which he notes, appropriately, we are still 'battling'. In so doing he attempts to address the kinds of objections raised by Supple:

> Let us be clear: the Holocaust, Shoah, Churban, Judeocide, whatever we call it, is the name we give to the attempted planned total physical annihilation of the Jewish people, and its partial perpetration with the murder of most of the Jews of Europe...A theory is being offered that as the Nazi policy of murder of German mental and other patients deemed to suffer from hereditary illnesses, the so-called euthanasia program, the murder of the many Gypsies, and the murder of the Jews were all based on so-called racial, that is, hereditary or genetic principles, that they are all part of the Holocaust. But Nazi policy toward Italians, Romanians, and Japanese was also based on racist principles, and I would suggest that there is a world of difference between problems the Nazis had with the "purity" of their own "race" and the social irritant they saw in the Romani people, whom they accused of being hereditary asocial criminals, on the one hand, and the universal threat to Nazi humankind they saw in the Jews. The attitude to Jews was a central pillar of Nazi ideology, and it could, in the end be solved only by total murder. The attitudes to the Gypsies was not a central part of Nazi ideology, and to the best of my knowledge there never was a plan to murder all the Gypsies. The T4 program of murder of the handicapped was a derivative of internal German-Nazi concerns. To equate these issues is, I think, to confuse them.[48]

Bauer is at pains to emphasise that his argument is not meant in any way to deny that other victims of the Nazis suffered just as horribly as the Jews, yet the stridency with which he insists on asserting a definition of the Holocaust in exclusively Jewish terms appears at the very least to be insensitive, particularly for

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[46] Ibid., p. 45.
[47] Carrie Supple, From Prejudice to Genocide (Staffordshire: Trentham, 1993), p. xii.
[48] Yehuda Bauer, 'A Past That Will Not Go Away', in M. Berenbaum & A. J. Peck (eds), The Holocaust and History. The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Re examined, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 12-22, 13-14.

example when he appears to minimise the enormity of the T4 campaign as only 'derivative of internal German-Nazi concerns'. Understandably, his argument has been challenged by other scholars in the field. Indeed in the same volume, in his chapter on Nazi eugenic theory, Benno Muller-Hill argues that the Nazis regarded the Jews, Gypsies and the insane in exactly the same light and sought the same gruesome outcome for them all.[49] This might suggest a middle view that although the Nazis' long-term plan would have involved the mass murder of a variety of groups on eugenic grounds the prioritising of the Jews remains a significant aspect of their attitudes and policies. It is quite clear that the reason Bauer is unwilling to re-define the subject in this way stems from his fear that this would be to downplay the centrality and the evil of anti-Semitism both in the Holocaust and in the present with potentially damaging consequences for the Jewish community in Europe, the Middle East and in America.

Is there any way out of the impasse of acknowledging that all current definitions of the Holocaust are subject to political manipulation? Might it not be possible, for instance, to suggest an entirely new nomenclature for these events? Whilst superficially attractive, such a proposal is problematic for a variety of reasons. As feminist scholars have long recognised, human speech and the naming of concepts always involve issues of power and control. As Omer Bartov has shown, even when the word Holocaust is replaced by the seemingly more neutral term Shoah, we should be wary of unequivocal acceptance of this move because the term has often been used in an Israeli/Zionist context to legitimise the state of Israel and its actions by reference to past suffering and injustice.[50] Nor should we lose sight of the fact that there is a wider cultural attachment to the term Holocaust that is important and should not be dismissed. The word is widely recognised through all sections of society, in Israel, America and Europe. The term need not, after all, become associated with any one narrow or particularist definition. For example, in defining its own usage the Washington Memorial Museum asserts both the particularity of the Holocaust for the Jews, but also encompasses its other victims:

> The state sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945... Gypsies, the handicapped and Poles were also targeted... Millions more including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet Prisoners of war and political dissidents also suffered.[51]

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[49] Benno Muller-Hill, 'Human Genetics and the Mass Murder of Jews, Gypsies, and Others', in M. Berenbaum & A. J. Peck (eds), The Holocaust and History, pp. 103-114.
[50] Omer Bartov, Murder in our Midst, p. 60.
[51] A Resource Book for Educators Teaching About the Holocaust, (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Washington D.C.), p. 3.

We should also not lose sight of the democratic power to alter and shape linguistic usage over time. It is interesting to observe, for example, that the success of Jewish scholars such as Bauer in associating the word with human suffering on a hitherto unimaginable scale has lead journalists to speak of the AIDs epidemic in Africa as a holocaust. The complaint of Elie Wiesel that: 'the reason I don't like the word "Holocaust" anymore is that it has been so trivialized and commercialized. These days it's used to refer to just about anything', may not be without substance, but it is Canute-like to suggest that the process can be curtailed.[52]

Attempts to provide more inclusive definitions highlight the competing pressures involved in defining the Holocaust. Asserting the particularity of the Holocaust for Jews, whilst acknowledging the persecution of other groups and the legitimate rights of people who have suffered at other times, is a precarious balancing act. If done badly, the resulting definition itself can cause great offence and result in trivialization and confusion. As the historian Michael R Marrus asserts, in wrestling with defining the Holocaust: 'Our collective responsibility is to avoid the distortions of inaccuracy, vulgarization and banalization that can easily result.'[53] As I have tried to show, this difficulty exists because how the Holocaust is defined, is intrinsically linked to arguments regarding ownership, suffering and remembrance. In short if politics is about manoeuvring for power within groups, the definition of what the Holocaust was and is, is of central significance to those for whom it is important.

Isabel Wollaston is one commentator who has wrestled perceptively with this problem. As she points out: 'It is an obvious, although often overlooked truism that the Holocaust is not one event.'[54] By using this term in preference to another, for example Hurban or Final Solution 'attendant implications that may be ethical, historical, philosophical, political, rhetorical, or theological'[55] are also adopted:

> 'Holocaust', arguably more than any other, is both a term that can be understood in a variety of ways, and one that is frequently accused of

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[52] Elie Wiesel, Evil and Exile, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), p. 39. This view is also shared by Deborah Lipstadt, 'Invoking The Holocaust', Judaism, 30 (1981), pp. 335-343. There is also some debate concerning the period which 'the Holocaust' refers to. Does it cover the period before the Nazis rose to power and the period after the war in which many people continued suffering as a result of Nazi rule? For a discussion of this see, Dan Milchman, 'The Holocaust in the Eyes of Historians: The problem of conceptualization, periodization and explanation', in Modern Judaism 15 (1995), pp. 234-264.
[53] Michael R Marrus, 'The Holocaust: Where we are, where we need to go – a comment', in M. Berenbaum & A. J. Peck (eds), The Holocaust and History. The Known, the Unknown and the Re-examined, pp. 30-34, 31.
[54] Isabel Wollaston, A War Against Memory? p. 3.
[55] Ibid.

> misrepresenting the reality it purports to express. On the one hand it is a term that belongs to the discourse of victims; on the other it is the term 'currently most widely employed'. Etymologically, 'Holocaust' is problematic for many because of its sacrificial overtones... Yet, for others, the significance of the term lies in its awe-ful connotations... The prevalent popular usage of the term serves to routinize its meaning... Finally, 'Holocaust' tends to be the term favoured by those engaged, consciously or unconsciously, in the mythologization of these events.[56]

Her conclusion is not that we should abandon the usage, but instead be ever alert to the power of definitions and to the social and political forces that shape them. In this way, 'The term Holocaust is employed... precisely because, given the ambivalence over its use, it best illustrates the complexity inherent in remembering these events.'[57]

The Debate over Uniqueness

Closely linked with the question of definition is the ongoing debate over the supposed uniqueness of the Holocaust. At one level such a discussion might seem a little odd. Firstly, there is a risk of stating the obvious in that all past events are in some sense unique. Secondly, the number of necessary qualifications to any claim of uniqueness may become insurmountable since the dictionary definition of unique is, 'being the only one of a particular type, without equal or like or, remarkable'. Yet absolute uniqueness of this kind, can, as Yehuda Bauer argues, lead to: 'total trivialisation: if the Holocaust is irrelevant because it is a one-time inexplicable occurrence then it is a waste of time to deal with it'.[58] Clearly, what is at stake in the deployment of the idea of the uniqueness of the Holocaust is a further instance of the use of political strategies devised to advance special interest groups.

As we might expect by now, Yehuda Bauer has been in the forefront of scholars seeking to emphasise a particular kind of uniqueness associated with the Holocaust. For Bauer it was the anti-Semitic motivation of the Nazis that made the Holocaust unique. It was the 'attempted planned total physical annihilation of the Jewish people, and [their] partial perpetration with the murder of most of the Jews of Europe.'[59] Once the particularity of the Holocaust has been established, in order to make it a worthwhile subject for study by everyone, it becomes necessary for Bauer to justify its continuing universal relevance. For Bauer, its uniqueness is actually part

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., p. 2.
[58] Yehuda Bauer, 'Is the Holocaust Explicable?', in Yehuda Bauer et al (eds), Remembering for the Future, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989), vol 2, pp. 1967-1975, 1967.
[59] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

of the reason for its relevance:

> The Holocaust is a combination of the unique and the universal, it is the uniqueness... that makes it so real, so threatening, so universal. Hence the fact that the Holocaust has become a cultural code, hence the fascination with the Holocaust, hence its universal aspects.[60]

Making anti-Semitism the unique feature of the Holocaust as Bauer does, is not without its problems. The German historian Eberhard Jackel directly opposes this view, arguing that: 'There is no direct line from antisemitism to the Holocaust for the very simple reason that antisemitism had existed for centuries and yet had never before led to such murderous destruction.'[61] For Jackel: 'The first merit of the debate is that it has finally disconnected research on antisemitism from research on the Holocaust.'[62] We might not of course entirely accept Jackel's argument. Murderous attacks had taken place in the past and it could be argued that all that had changed was the efficiency of the means to bring about genocide. But as he says, the argument is an important one since it draws attention to the complexities of historical causation. To say as Bauer does that anti-Semitism 'caused' the Holocaust may be part of the truth, but the particularities of time and place also need to be emphasised. We should also note the difficulties involved in Bauer's slide from the particular to the universal that does not altogether avoid the problem of making the Holocaust an example of something important in the present. He still does not answer the question why make this particular example of genocide a contemporary social code?

Another advocate of the uniqueness of the Holocaust is Steven T Katz. Like Bauer, he emphasises the motivations of the Nazis: 'a close study of the relevant comparative historical data will show that only in the case of Jewry under the Third Reich was such an all inclusive non-compromising, unmitigated murder intended.'[63] Katz attempts to substantiate his comparative approach by reference to other cases of genocide: the fate of the Native American Indians; the state-sponsored famine in the Ukraine under Stalin; and the Armenian genocide.

According to Katz, in the case of the American Indians both the causation and character of the tragedy were different to the Holocaust of the Jews. This is because

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[60] Ibid., p. 22.
[61] Eberhard Jackel, 'The Holocaust: Where we are, where we need to go', in Berenbaum & A. J. Peck (eds), The Holocaust and History. The Known, the Unknown and the Re-examined, pp. 23-29, 25.
[62] Ibid., p. 23.
[63] Steven T. Katz, 'The Uniqueness of the Holocaust: The Historical Dimension', in Alan S. Rosenbaum, (ed.), Is The Holocaust Unique? (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998) pp. 19-38, 19.

disease was a primary factor in the former case and was largely responsible for a great proportion of the deaths that occurred amongst the native population. As he puts it: 'In a period of 115 years during which the indigenous population declined by over 1.5 million, only 53,000 casualties, or 37 per cent of the total lost can be counted as having been intentionally murdered.'[64] Consequently depopulation 'happened unwittingly rather than by design.'[65] In effect the murder of the Native American Indians was the unintentional result of colonisation. Their total eradication as a people was never the aim; the idea that 'you cannot live at all' was never formulated; further evidence of this fact is the existence of reservations coupled with the missionaries' strenuous attempts to 'civilise' the 'savages'. What happened is, for Katz, an example of ethnocide rather than genocide. The Indians' cultural survival was severely endangered but their biological existence was not.

The same holds true in Katz's view of the famine in the Ukraine under Stalin. It began with a purge eliminating politicians, academics and cultural leaders and culminated in the death of some five million Ukrainians. Stalin's aim regarding the Ukraine was to create a subservient state and to implement collectivisation as quickly as possible. The famine that resulted from the enforced export of grain was man-made and while in some respects intentional, (due to the Ukrainians' protest against, and resistance to, forced exportation of grain), Stalin did not set out to exterminate all Ukrainians. Katz labels this an example of national conflict and internal colonialism rather than genocide.[66] Finally, the genocide against the Armenians is often cited in comparisons with the Holocaust. For Katz, this is an example of internal colonisation. The Turks only wanted to remove the Armenians from Turkish soil. They would not have eliminated them from other countries, so again the murder of all Armenians was not the intention, or stated plan of the Turks. Katz highlights further dissimilarities: there was the possibility of assimilation and the assault against the Armenians was not total in either conception or reality. Many Armenians found refuge in other countries and while their cultural identity might suffer and die their biological existence could continue.

Several critiques of Katz's argument can be advanced. The first is that he does not compare the fate of other groups persecuted by the Nazis to the fate of the Jews. If the experience of the Jews is examined together with the experience of, for example, the Roma and Sinti a more ambiguous picture emerges. Moreover, Katz's

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[64] Ibid., p. 21.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., p. 27.

selective use of examples of genocide is inevitably going to result in more differences than similarities. The examples of genocide he has chosen are widely disparate in time, place, method and duration. Consequently, an objective comparison is impossible. I would, however, also argue that an objective conclusion would not be easily reached using any comparative approach because its very foundation is flawed in that, as Vahakn Dadrian, puts it: 'the sense of uniqueness belongs to the domain of emotive self-images.'[67] Secondly, with regard to the ambiguity of the categories that he uses, Katz claims that the political motivation was 'internal colonisation' in the case of Native American Indians and the Armenians. The forced subservience of peoples to the ruling party and ideological aims, in all cases, (forced collectivisation in the Ukraine and deportations in the case of Armenians), is, he argues, essentially different from the Nazi assault on Jewry. The sole aim of the Nazis according to this interpretation, then, was the biological elimination of all Jews in comparison to the cultural annihilation, physical removal or slavery of the other groups. In reality, as we have already seen, this is too sweeping a statement. The Nazis were also guided by political and ideological aims and it can be argued that the enslavement of other peoples, and the biological extermination of the Jews (and others) was a by-product of this vision.

The approach Katz uses employs other examples of ambiguous terminology, for example 'intentional genocide' and 'unintentional genocide', 'ethnocide', and 'annihilation'. One result of this ambiguity is that degrees of severity are implied and that in all cases what happened to the Jews is presented as more severe than what happened to others. For example: 'There is an important, non-reductive, phenomenological difference to be drawn between mass murder... and complete group extinction... and a war of unlimited biological annihilation.'[68] With each comparative case, Katz stresses that the persecuted groups were 'permitted to live', although they could have been massacred.

It is not just the historiographical, but also the moral implications of Katz's and Bauer's positions, which are troubling. The initial claim Katz makes at the outset that he is not 'making a moral claim... that the Holocaust was more evil', is unconvincing because in each case his conclusion is just that. The intention may not be to demean the suffering of others but this is the result. This is evidenced by his use of

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[67] Vahakn N. Dadrian, 'The Comparative Aspects of the Armenian and Jewish Cases of Genocide: A Sociohistorical Perspective', in Alan S. Rosenbaum, (ed.), Is The Holocaust Unique? (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998) pp. 101-135, 101.
[68] Katz, 'The Uniqueness of the Holocaust: The Historical Dimension', in Is the Holocaust Unique? p. 31.

statistical data. The initial disclaimer is that he is 'not suggesting that the Holocaust involved the greatest number of victims of any mass crime. It did not'. However his argument that 'the numbers of victims will not establish the uniqueness of the Holocaust'[69] is overshadowed by his reliance on figures and percentages to diminish the losses suffered in the comparative cases. Thus he is able to state that there were only 53,000 casualties amongst Native American Indians. In the case of the famine in the Ukraine, which resulted in the deaths of 5 million he states:

> Recognising the great tragedy that occurred here, even the maximum loss rate of 33.5 percent does not support a genocidal reading of the event. For, on these numbers, that is a loss rate of between 6 and 33.5 percent, 66.5 percent of Ukrainian children at a minimum survived.[70]

As well as noting the tendentious nature of the arguments put forward by those seeking to define a particular Jewish definition of the uniqueness of the Holocaust, we should also be aware of the ferocity with which both sides in this debate have pursued their case, a further indication of its political nature. Here, for example, is David Stannard discussing the argument for Holocaust uniqueness:

> This rarely examined, taken-for-granted assumption on the part of so many did not appear out of thin air. On the contrary, it is the hegemonic product of many years of strenuous intellectual labour by a handful of Jewish scholars and writers who have dedicated much if not all of their professional lives to the advancement of this exclusivist idea. And it is the work of these people that I shall be addressing in most of the rest of this chapter. For not only is the essence of their argument demonstrably erroneous, the larger thesis that it fraudulently advances is fundamentally racist and violence-provoking. At the same time, moreover, it willingly provides a screen behind which opportunistic governments attempt to conceal their own past and ongoing genocidal actions.[71]

Whilst it will be clear by now that my sympathies in this debate lie largely with Stannard, the tone and sweeping nature of his assertions is partly explicable by his own championing of the history and rights of America's Native Indian population which he regards as not only a comparable example of genocide to that of the Jews but one which is deliberately ignored in America by means of focussing on the uniqueness of the Holocaust.

Even more ferocious has been the polemic advanced by the American Norman Finkelstein himself the child of Holocaust survivors. In his provocatively entitled book The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish

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[69] Ibid., p. 19.
[70] Ibid., pp. 30-31.
[71] D. Stannard, 'Uniqueness as Denial: The Politics of Genocide Scholarship', in Is the Holocaust Unique? p. 167.

Suffering published in 2000 he claims that the Holocaust and its current status within the American public consciousness is the result of shrewd political manoeuvring on the part of the American Jewish elite: 'To protect their strategic asset [Israel], American Jewish elites "remembered" The Holocaust'.[72] Finkelstein believes that when it was politically damaging for the American Jewish community to align itself with Israel, the Holocaust was ignored. For this reason in the years immediately after the Second World War when Israel had significant communist sympathies, it was not politically expedient for the American Jewish community to draw attention to either Israel or the Holocaust. It was only after the war in 1967, when Israel displayed its military strength as a state that it became 'an asset' and in turn, this meant that the Holocaust also became an asset.

Whilst Finkelstein may have a point in drawing attention to the way in which Holocaust studies have undoubtedly been promoted and their agendas influenced by politically motivated pressure groups, his picture of a conscious conspiracy behind the growth of interest in the subject is surely too one-sided.[73] As Michael Marrus has argued, the tempo of historical research was influenced by a number of different factors.[74] The time lag between 1945 and the late 1960s was partly the result of a kind of moral and psychological numbness in the face of the enormity of what had happened reinforced by the strong desire of many survivors to forget the past and to recreate some kind of normality in their lives. One powerful impetus for research came from the new series of trials of perpetrators which began in spectacular fashion with that of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1962.[75] These had the effect of challenging many no doubt politically convenient assumptions about the small numbers involved in genocide, and stiffened the resolve of Jewish organisations and of governments to bring the perpetrators to justice.

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[72] Norman Finkelstein, The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering, (London: Verson, 2nd Edition, 2003) p. 24.

[73] The ferocity of Finkelstein's language should draw our attention to the fact that the nature of Holocaust politics is somewhat different in America from what pertains in Britain. The reaction to the recent film 'The Passion of the Christ' by Mel Gibson provides an indication of this fact. The Jewish reaction to the film in the U.S. was so emotive that protestors gathered outside the premier of the film wearing concentration camp uniforms and chanting 'boycott Mel Gibson'. In Britain, according to Mark Kermode, writing in The Observer, Sunday February 29, 2004 Jewish and non-Jewish concerns about the film have so far, centred largely on the graphic violence which was even worse than anticipated. Nevertheless the issues which are being debated concerning the Holocaust are very similar despite the difference of tone.

[74] Michael Marrus, The Holocaust in History, (London: Penguin Books, 1987).

[75] The classic account of the trial which did much to stimulate renewed interest in the Holocaust is H. Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, (London, Penguin, 1963).

Another and more subtle approach is that of the British historian Tim Cole who like Finkelstein emphasises the way in which since the 1950s the Holocaust has become big business and we are now at the point, he claims, where Jewish and western culture are 'saturated with the '"Holocaust"'.[76] Cole also, draws attention to the initial silence regarding the Holocaust and the subsequent explosion of interest:

> From a position of relative ignorance about the Holocaust on the part of non-survivors and relative silence about the Holocaust on the part of survivors, the Holocaust has emerged – in the Western World – as probably the most talked about and oft-represented event of the twentieth century.[77]

However, Cole does not agree that the rise of the 'Holocaust Myth' was purely politically motivated. For Cole: 'The myth of the 'Holocaust' involves above everything else, an attempt to extract meaning from this troubling past.'[78] As such it is motivated by a wide range of contemporary social, cultural as well as political preoccupations and needs. Raul Hilberg agrees with the theoretically flexible approach that Cole adopts in contradiction to Finkelstein's rigidly dogmatic assertions, but opts for yet another significant reason for the growth of interest in the Holocaust:

> Topics may be suppressed or catapulted to public attention, but always for reasons that reflect the problems and needs of a society. In the United States the phenomenon now known as the Holocaust did not take root until after the agonies of the Vietnam war, when a new generation of Americans was searching for moral certainties, and when the Holocaust became a marker of an absolute evil against which all other transgressions in the conduct of nations could be measured and assessed.[79]

Finkelstein also addresses the central argument advanced by Bauer that the Holocaust was unique in its targeting of Jews for extermination as a consequence of anti-Semitism. Finkelstein dismisses the claim to uniqueness for several reasons. He begins by dismissing the concept as trivial since all historical events are in one sense unique and for this reason the 'uniqueness dogma makes no sense.'[80] More seriously by emphasising its uniqueness, the Holocaust undergoes a process of mystification and rational approaches to the subject are compromised: 'Only a flea's hop separates the claim of Holocaust uniqueness from the claim that the Holocaust cannot be rationally apprehended.'[81] Whilst Finkelstein is not alone in voicing these concerns, what drives his argument and gives it its rhetorical appeal is once again

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[76] Tim Cole, Images of the Holocaust, p. 2.
[77] Ibid., p. 3.
[78] Ibid., p. 172.
[79] Raul Hilberg, The Politics of Memory, p. 123.
[80] Norman Finkelstein, The Holocaust Industry, p. 42.
[81] Ibid., p. 44.

his attack on what he sees as a politically motivated Jewish conspiracy. For Finkelstein, the reasons for up-holding 'the uniqueness dogma' persist because of more sinister motives: 'unique suffering confers unique entitlement.'[82] There is a kind of moral capital in this claim and he argues that the Holocaust has given Jews the 'right' to see themselves as specifically under threat. Therefore, any measures, even those normally considered unjust, can be taken to prevent a recurrence:

> The Holocaust... proved to be the perfect weapon for deflecting criticism of Israel... The Holocaust performed the same function as Israel: another invaluable chip in a high-status power game. The avowed concern for Holocaust memory was as contrived as the avowed concern for Israel's fate.[83]

Not only has the Holocaust been used to curtail criticism of Israel, Finkelstein believes it has also led to the creation of a new type of anti-Semitism. This 'perceived anti-Semitism,' together with threats made to Israel, aid fundraising and benefit the political arena of the Jewish elites because they 'branded all opposition to their conservative policies anti-Semitic.' For Finkelstein, 'evoking historic persecution deflected present day criticism.'[84] This meant that Jewish communities could then ignore the real reasons for animosity and criticism. The historian Omer Bartov concurs arguing that the polemical charge of anti-Semitism:

> Has been abused by all. Israeli governments have sought to legitimize their policies... German governments have sought renewed international respectability by well-orchestrated public proclamations... Both the left and the right in Europe have accused each other (not without reason) of harbouring anti-Semitic ideas.[85]

Finkelstein's claim that the Holocaust has become a kind of moral justification within sections of Israeli society for the harsh treatment of the Palestinians is also a reasonable one that is being widely voiced. The Jewish theologian Marc Ellis speaks for many when he argues that:

> With the increasing power of Israel, the Holocaust too becomes empowered, almost militarised. In speech and action the Holocaust becomes an exclusive Jewish property, a property in need of a theology to articulate its uniqueness and *justify* its owners.[86]

Where Finkelstein is open to criticism is in the sweepingly polemical way in

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[82] Ibid., p. 47.
[83] Ibid., p. 30.
[84] Ibid., p. 37.
[85] Omer Bartov, Murder in our Midst, p. 56.
[86] Marc Ellis, Unholy Alliance: Religion and Atrocity in Our Time, (London: SCM, 1997), pp. 11-12.

which he puts his case. Terms like a 'chip in a high status power game' make good sound bites but it is not clear to what they actually refer. Similarly, not content to criticise American Jews as influenced by the concern for the state of Israel in their promotion of Holocaust research and memorials, he dismisses such concerns as contrived and insincere without offering any convincing evidence for this charge.

Finkelstein's book gained further publicity and aroused interest in America by its attack not just on the Jewish community, but on American society more generally. Part of his case is that American support of Holocaust memorials and museums is directly connected to pro-Israel attitudes. But more seriously he suggests that Americans in general are happy to accept the understanding of the Holocaust advanced by scholars such as Bauer and Katz and to evoke its memory, because ultimately they were not complicit in it. By focussing on the Holocaust, other humanitarian abuses they were directly involved in as a nation can be ignored. As examples he cites the genocidal assault on Native American Indians and the oppression of blacks on their own continent as well as their support of death squads in Haiti and the oppression of the East Timorese abroad. For Finkelstein, lessons can be learnt from the Holocaust, but not only from the Jewish experience: 'Were the will there we could learn much about ourselves from the Nazi experience.'[87] This is a morally serious argument and one that he advances with a little less polemical attitude, though one might comment that it is far from clear how an understanding of the fate of America's indigenous population from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries is illuminated by reference to the Holocaust, a point to which I will need to return later.

Finkelstein also subjects the link between anti-Semitism and the supposed uniqueness of the Holocaust to a less sustained, but equally polemical attack. He dismisses the idea that centuries of anti-Semitism led to the Holocaust. Instead, he argues once again that the Holocaust 'dogma of eternal Gentile hatred has served both to justify the necessity of a Jewish state and to account for the hostility directed at Israel.'[88] Sarcastically he continues that: 'If all the world wants the Jews dead, truly the wonder is that they are still alive – and, unlike much of humanity, not exactly starving.'[89] Finkelstein suggests that arguments regarding anti-Semitism are as 'irrational' as arguments concerning uniqueness, particularly given that Jews in the world today are not victims. Largely they do not live in poor conditions and they

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[87] Norman Finkelstein, The Holocaust Industry, p. 145.
[88] Ibid., p. 50.
[89] Ibid.

are not subjected to the same lowly social status that many Latinos, blacks and gays are. Finally for good measure Finkelstein argues that for Jews, their ethnic identity is an asset.[90] From this one can conclude that Finkelstein is both a commentator on the process by which the study of the Holocaust has become politicised but also himself a prime exemplar of that process.

Another way of bringing out the political nature of this debate is to pay some attention to those groups who are marginalized or erased by talk of the uniqueness of the Holocaust for the Jews. Here the fate of both homosexuals and Gypsies is instructive. Although both groups suffered at the hands of the Nazis, this fact is often ignored because of ongoing prejudice against them and a consequent unwillingness to recognise them as 'proper' victims of the death camps. In the case of homosexuals E. J. Haeberle argues:

> Apart from a few personal memoirs of German homosexuals which attracted no serious attention, nothing more was published on the matter for decades. Indeed the whole subject proved distasteful to both the Germans and the Allies. After all homosexual behaviour remained a crime in both East and West Germany as well as Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union. Thus the homosexual inmates of Nazi concentration camps were not considered to have been unjustly imprisoned, and therefore they also remained uncompensated for their suffering.[91]

According to Ian Hancock, a leading historian in the field, the post-war attitude to Gypsies remained similarly negative and grounded in damaging stereotypical images:

> Following the collapse of the Third Reich, nothing was done to assist the Romani survivors, no effort made by the liberators to reorient them; instead, the terms of a 1926 pre-Nazi anti-Gypsy law still in effect ensured that those lacking a trade remained out of sight. Since that time, all of the programs used by the Nazis to deal with the Gypsies have been either suggested or implemented by various European nations – sterilizations in Slovakia, recommendations for incineration in a furnace from an Irish government official, forced incarceration and deportation in Germany. Today the Romani population faces its severest crisis since the Holocaust; neo-Nazi race crimes against Gypsies have seen rapes, beatings and murders in Germany, Hungary and Slovakia; anti-Gypsy pogroms in Romania and Bulgaria, have including lynchings and home-burnings, are increasing.[92]

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[90] Ibid., p. 32.
[91] E. J. Haeberle, 'Swastika, Pink Triangle and Yellow Star: The destruction of sexology and the persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany', in M. B. Duberman et al (eds.), Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1991), p. 373. Other studies of this topic include Richard Plant, The Pink Triangle. The Nazi War Against Homosexuals, (Edinburgh: Mainstream,1987); Claudia Schoppmann, Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians during the Third Reich, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
[92] Ian Hancock, 'Responses to the Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust', in Is the Holocaust Unique? p. 55.

His conclusion on the current state of scholarship is that:

> It is abundantly clear that some historians see only what they want to see, that a very blind eye is being turned in the direction of Gypsy history, and that where the Romani genocide in Nazi Germany is acknowledged, it is kept, with the fewest of exceptions carefully separated from the Jewish experience.[93]

More worryingly, on occasions not only has the Gypsy experience been distanced from the Jewish experience, it has been flatly denied. There is the case of Rabbi Seymour Siegel, former professor of ethics at the Jewish Theological Seminary and executive director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. When asked if room might be made on the council for a representative of the Romani, or Gypsy, people who had suffered so horrendously under the Nazis – side by side, in the same death camps and gas chambers and ovens as the Jews – Siegel described such a proposal as 'Cockamamie' and expressed doubt that the Gypsies even existed as a people.[94]

The issue of recognition of the Roma as victims of the Holocaust is far from resolved. On 3 August 2004 a candle-lit vigil of Roma leaders and survivors was held at Auschwitz to commemorate the victims of the so-called gypsy Camp which was close to the still preserved huts of Auschwitz-Birkenau. According to The Times one purpose of the gathering was to assert the rights of the community to be represented at the 60th anniversary celebrations of the liberation of the camp since they were not invited to the 50th anniversary in 1995.[95]

Of course Ian Hancock also makes a valid point when he points out that that generally it is distasteful 'to engage in a one-upmanship of suffering'.[96] It seems inevitable, he goes on, that 'In comparing catastrophes, there is a temptation to argue as though one could arrive at a hierarchy of suffering or cruelty or radical evil such that only one such process reaches the apogee of uniqueness.'[97] Garber and Zuckerman point out the consequences of such a misguided approach:

> We should not be swayed by arguments that six million, efficiently killed Jews represent a more horrific slaughter than one or two million inefficiently

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[93] Ibid., p. 40.
[94] David E. Stannard, 'Uniqueness as Denial: The Politics of Genocide Scholarship', in, Is the Holocaust Unique?, pp. 163-208, 195.
[95] The Times, 4 August 2004.
[96] Ian Hancock, 'Uniqueness, Gypsies and Jews', in Remembering for the Future, Vol. 3, pp. 2017-2025, 2018.
[97] Seymour Drescher, 'The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Holocaust: A Comparative Analysis', in Is the Holocaust Unique? pp. 65-85, 80.

> slaughtered Armenians. In fact even the "six million" figure, often invoked in characterizations of "The Holocaust," points up the problem of stressing uniqueness and chosenness over commonality. The truth is that eleven million people were killed by the Nazis in the concentration camps. Nearly half of these are excluded in most characterizations of "The Holocaust," and this seems to imply that Gentile deaths are not as significant as Jewish deaths.[98]

Uniqueness as a property attributed to the Holocaust turns out to be an important but highly problematic factor in the continued politicization of Holocaust remembrance, teaching and research. What it seems to leave little room for, is the eirenic perspective presented by the historian Michael Burleigh:

> In the last decade or so, historians have dramatically increased our understanding of Nazi racialism, which was until recently regarded as being effectively coterminous with racial anti-Semitism. The new cast of victims includes the so called 'anti-social', Arab or Afro-Germans... foreign forced labour, homosexuals and lesbians, the mentally and physically handicapped, Sinti and Roma (gypsies) and Soviet prisoners of war, none of these horrible fates detracts from the singularity of the Nazi murder of six million Jews, any more than the latter does vice versa.[99]

Graphic evidence of the failure of the kind of consensus described by Burleigh can be found in the heated controversies which have occurred concerning the politics of commemoration many of which have centred upon the death camps themselves and which have become the focus of increasing scholarly research in recent years.

The Politics of Commemoration

No better examples of what one might call the battle for ownership of the Holocaust can be found than in a number of very public religious controversies that have arisen, particularly in relationship to acts of commemoration at Auschwitz.[100] As the historian Alan Berger has remarked:

> A common assumption among people of goodwill is that if Auschwitz cannot bring people together, then nothing can. Both Catholics and Jews view Auschwitz as a site of anguish and pain. For Poles it is a site of national martyrdom at which upwards of eighty thousand Polish people perished. Jews view Auschwitz as a vast necropolis in which approximately one million Jewish

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[98] Garber and Zuckerman, 'Why do we call the Holocaust "The Holocaust"', p. 208.
[99] Michael Burleigh, Ethics and Extermination: Reflections on Nazi Genocide, (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p. 155.
[100] For good general discussions of the place of memorials in Holocaust remembrance see D. Stone, 'Memory, Memorials and Museums' in D. Stone (ed.), The Historiography of the Holocaust, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 508-532; and J. Young, The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meanings, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

> people were murdered. Yet, ironically, the two faith communities *share no common memory* of Nazism's murderous onslaught.[101]

In 1984 a Carmelite convent was established just outside the fenced area of Auschwitz at what was called the old theatre building.[102] Its primary purpose was said to be to pray for those murdered in the camp. Jewish groups claimed that this was an attempt to Christianise the site and also had the effect of playing down the enormity of anti-Semitism by highlighting the fate of the much smaller number of Christian victims. Despite negotiations in Geneva in 1986 between high-level Catholic and Jewish delegations who agreed that no convent would be built on the site itself, protests continued including a highly publicised sit-in by a Rabbi and six students inside the convent in July 1989.[103] Equally contentious has been the dispute over religious symbolism. A large cross was initially erected in the garden of the convent, but subsequently hundreds more were planted at the camp. When the museum authorities removed these from the site in 1997, there followed a right-wing Polish nationalist backlash led by Kzmierz Swinton who planted hundreds of crosses immediately outside the perimeter of the museum many bearing the inscription 'only under this cross, only under this symbol, Poland is Poland and a Pole is a Pole'.[104] This response suggests a highly polarised situation fuelled by the re-emergence in post-Communist Poland of traditional Polish Christian anti-Semitism, and whilst this is certainly part of the picture, the issues are more subtle and affect even those Christians and Jews of goodwill. For the latter, Auschwitz will forever remain the symbol of Jewish destruction carried out in a context in which two thousand years of Christian anti-Semitism made it easy for the Nazi occupiers to find willing local abettors of their regime. For the former, Auschwitz bears witness to the fact that a significant number of Polish intellectuals, priests and religious were also the victims of Nazi persecution and died in the death camps. Moreover the imperative to honour their deaths since the fall of Communism arises partly from the fact that under the former regime the Catholic Church struggled to gain public recognition of the fact that any of those who died were Christians and not committed Communists. In this respect there is an ironic parallel between the post-war Polish government's refusal to recognise that the Jews were a separate group of victims rather than the heroic communists martyred at the hands of Fascism that the regime went to extraordinary lengths to commemorate. Why, Polish Christians ask, should they not be free to

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[101] A. Berger, 'Post-Auschwitz Catholic-Jewish Dialogue: Mixed Signals and Missed Opportunities', in Remembering for the Future, vol. 3, pp. 661-672, 661.
[102] This was actually used to store Zyklon B gas and the possessions of those who were murdered by it. Ibid., p. 663.
[103] In addition to Berger, see S. Krajewski, 'Auschwitz at the threshold of a new Millennium', in Remembering for the Future, vol. 3, pp. 322-340.
[104] Berger, 'Post-Auschwitz Catholic-Jewish Dialogue', p. 666.

honour and remember their fellow Christians who died in the Holocaust? Must this necessarily detract from acknowledging the fate of the Jews? For many Jews the danger is that this represents a blurring of what they see as the central enormity of the Holocaust, the attempt to murder every Jewish man, woman and child. They also accuse Christians of insensitivity in seeking to add a Christian presence to Auschwitz for them the outcome of two thousand years of Christian persecution of the Jews.

Equally fraught and in some ways more complicated has been the furore over the Roman Catholic Church's canonisation in 1998 of the Carmelite nun, Edith Stein, who perished in Auschwitz in 1942.[105] Hailed by the Catholic Church as a martyr for the Christian faith, her Jewish origins made her, it was argued, a potent symbol of reconciliation between the two religions. Not all Jews were persuaded. Judith Banki's critical response is all the more noteworthy since she has been a leading Jewish exponent of interfaith dialogue in America:

> With the best of intentions, some Christians have suggested that Edith Stein serve as a symbol of reconciliation between Christians and Jews. That is no more likely than naming a conscientious convert from Christianity to Judaism to serve as a symbol of reconciliation. Some Christians have a difficult time accepting this point, because of a theological perspective which views Judaism as a precursor to Christianity, and thus the move from Jew to Christian a natural or normative development. Though perhaps not deliberate, there is an inescapable triumphalism implicit in using the name/example of a person who has abandoned your community of faith for another's purposes of reconciliation.[106]

What this response makes clear is that commemoration even that undertaken with the best of intentions including the desire to remember and honour the dead, can be a divisive rather than a healing response to the traumas of the Holocaust.

Undoubtedly, the best known example of this troubling fact has been the reception of the Vatican's 1998 document We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah, published in 1998. The intention was that the statement should be a formal act of remembrance at the end of the second millennium and part of a wider act of repentance by the Catholic Church for past acts of injustice it had committed. In his accompanying letter to the Secretary of the Vatican Commission For Religious Relations with the Jews, Pope John Paul II expressed the objectives of the statement:

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[105] There is a collection of widely differing views from both Jewish and Christian perspectives following her beatification in 1987 in H. Cargas (ed.), The Unnecessary Problem of Edith Stein, (Lanham, Mary Land: University Press of America, 1994).
[106] Ibid., p. 47.

> It is my fervent hope that the document: *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, which the Commission For Religious Relations with the Jews has prepared under your direction, will indeed help to heal the wounds of past misunderstandings and injustices. May it enable memory to play its necessary part in the process of shaping a future in which the unspeakable iniquity of the *Shoah* will never again be possible.[107]

The appeal here to memory is interesting in the light of the contemporary scholarly debate about the relationship between historical scholarship and collective memory. Whether consciously or not, its use here draws attention to the fact that just as much as any physical monument, a brief document on why and how we should remember the Holocaust is itself part of the process by which governments, nations and in this case institutions seek to control how popular memory of an event will be perceived in the future.

From this perspective three aspects of the document have proved to be particularly controversial. Firstly, critics have seen the distinction that is drawn between Christian anti-Judaism and secular Nazi anti-Semitism as an attempt to exculpate the Christian Church from its share of responsibility for what happened.[108] Secondly, regret for what are called 'the errors and failures of those sons and daughters of the Church' who participated in the processes of the Holocaust has again been taken as an attempt to play down the responsibility of the Church's leadership.[109] Thirdly, critics have accused the writers of the document of presenting a very partial and one-sided account of the reaction of the German episcopate to the Nazi regime, for example mentioning Cardinal Bertram's pastoral letter attacking aspects of National Socialism in 1933, but not his continued support for Hitler until the end of the war.[110]

Yet there is a sense in which the accusation that the section of the document on the historical record of the German Catholic Church lacks sufficient detail is to miss part of the point. As Geoffrey Hartman has argued, any attempt to commemorate past events necessarily involves not only bias but also extreme

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[107] Catholic Truth Society, Catholic Jewish Relations. Documents form the Holy See, (London: CTS, 1991), p. 58.
[108] Ibid., p. 66, where it is stated that 'The Shoah was the work of a thoroughly modern neo-pagan regime'.
[109] Ibid., p. 69.
[110] All three of these criticisms are made by Mark Lindsay in 'Mea Culpa and the Magisterium: 'Wir Erinnen' and the Problems of Confession', in Maxwell We Remember, vol. 2, pp. 413-424. For similar criticisms see the chapters in R. Braham (ed.), The Vatican and the Holocaust. The Catholic Church and the Jews during the Nazi Era, (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 2000).

selectivity. This is precisely the purpose of any officially sanctioned formal act of remembrance be it written in stone or print:

> It constructs, that is, a highly selective story, focussed in what is basic for the community and turning away from everything else. The collective memory, in the process of making sense of history, shapes a gradually formalized agreement to transmit the meaning of intensely shared events in way that does not have to be individually struggled for. Canonical interpretation takes over, ceremonies develop, monuments are built.[111]

Making use of this critical perspective, a number of historians have chartered the way in which solemn acts of remembrance and memorialising including the commemoration of the First World War in Britain, the Second World War in France and the Vietnam War in America are inherently contested and subject to change over time.[112] The same process can currently be observed in America in its debates over how to memorialise the events of September 11th. From the outset there were rival interpretations of the atrocity, the one seeing it as an outrage against American values of democracy and decency requiring a world-wide war on terrorism, the other being willing to be more self-critical and reflective about the extent to which America's own actions and attitudes had provoked anger and a sense of injustice. Hartman's purpose in highlighting the inevitably contested and partial nature of acts of remembrance is not, however, to advocate a relativism devoid of moral judgement. What is needed, he argues, is 'a sanctioned principle of forgetting' which can provide some means of choosing critically between 'alternative modes of amnesia.' This is a formidable task, and it may be that the needs of different communities to remember the past in different ways will make such a task impossible. All that can be hoped is that critical awareness of the issues will reinforce rather than undermine the search for responsible forms of remembrance. At the very least we need to be aware that that Holocaust commemoration is by no means unique in being subject to these pressures.

A case study in Holocaust politics: Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain.

As I have indicated, many of the arguments about the politicisation of the Holocaust have taken place within academia, though debates about the meaning and purpose of memorial sites such as Auschwitz and the messages conveyed in

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[111] G. Hartman (ed.), Holocaust Remembrance, p. 15.

[112] Works on this topic include J. Mayo, War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond, (New York: Praeger, 1988); Pierre Nora, Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, 3 vols, (London: Columbia University Press, English ed. 1996, 7 & 8); Gerald Parsons (ed.), Perspectives on Civil Religion, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

films do spill over into wider public consciousness. This latter process can also by illustrated by a consideration of the reaction to the inauguration of a national Holocaust Remembrance Day in Britain. In 1999 the then Home Secretary, Jack Straw, stated that:

> The Prime Minister has asked me to consult widely on the proposal for a Holocaust Remembrance Day. The purpose of a Holocaust Remembrance Day is to ensure that the horrendous crimes against humanity committed during the Holocaust are never forgotten, and its relevance for each new generation is understood. The Government has a clear vision of a multi-cultural Britain – one which values the contribution made by each of our many ethnic, cultural and faith communities. We are determined to see a truly dynamic society, in which people from different backgrounds can live and work together.[113]

On January 27 2001, one year and three months after the initial proposal was announced, Britain held its first Holocaust Memorial Day. In the statement of purpose issued by the government reference is made to: remembrance, understanding, raising awareness, reflection, education, learning for the future, tolerance, democracy, universal dignity, equal rights, responsibilities commitment to opposing racism, antisemitism, victimisation, genocide and 'support [of] our shared aspirations with both our European partners and the wider international community centred on the ideals of peace, justice and community for all.'[114]

Holocaust Memorial Day was and remains both overtly political and wide-ranging in it aims. As Jack Straw's comments suggest, it is not concerned solely with remembrance and education regarding the events of 1939-1945, the objectives of the national event are much more far-reaching: 'To remember the Holocaust and other victims of the Nazi era in a way that alerts us to what can happen if we do not take personal and collective responsibility for tackling racism and other forms of bigotry.'[115] The political nature of these statements did not go unnoticed or unchallenged in sources hostile to New Labour. As Philip Johnston caustically observed in an article for The Daily Telegraph, published on the eve of the first Holocaust Memorial Day:

> From the outset, the concept was linked to the Government's multi-cultural agenda. Planning has been carried out by the Race Equality Unit at the Home Office, and Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, has emphasised its importance in the creation of a "tolerant and anti-racist society.[116]

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[113] Government Proposal for a Holocaust Remembrance Day, Home Office Press Release, October 1999, cited online at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/reu/hdrem.htm
[114] Cited online at: www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk/sections/1/frontpage.htm
[115] Cited online at: www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk/2004/sections/aims/index.asp
[116] Philip Johnston, 'A day to let Britain reflect upon evil', in The Telegraph, cited online at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main/jhtml?xml=/news/2001/01/11/nhol311.xml

But why, he wondered, was it necessary to accept all of the government's views on multi-culturalism in order to remember the dead of the Holocaust? The Jewish novelist and journalist Howard Jacobson has also drawn attention to what he regards as the blatant manipulation of the event for political purposes. Was it, he asked, introduced because of its immense historical importance and continuing moral relevance, or to demonstrate that New Labour is 'a "caring" government'?[117] The politicisation of the Holocaust as a result of the pressure exerted by particular groups seeking to claim ownership of its history and significance has also been very much in evidence in debates abut the creation and meaning of a Holocaust Memorial Day. From the beginning the government has sought to widen the lessons that can be drawn from the event as indicated by its statement of purpose:

> Events since the Holocaust – such as the genocide committed in Rwanda and Bosnia – show that we still have much to learn. Holocaust Memorial Day encompasses the key lessons of the Holocaust:
>
> - To take responsibility for our own actions.
> - To stand up to injustice.
> - To learn and educate each other about different cultures, religions and sexualities.
> - To accept and embrace diversity.
>
> These principles are at the cornerstone of our democracy – a democracy which needs to value equal rights and responsibilities for all its citizens.[118]

But why then was it decided to call the event a Holocaust Memorial Day at all, wondered Mark Oliver in The Guardian? Since the issues and themes from the statement of purpose mentioned above are applicable to many acts of genocide, why was 'Holocaust Memorial Day' chosen instead of 'Genocide Day'? The answer he believed was that: 'The government feared this would take the Jewish holocaust too far out of the focus.'[119]

The Jewish Historian and Holocaust activist David Cesarani has been prominent amongst those arguing for the continued centrality of the Jewish experience in any form of Holocaust Memorial Day. It is, however, interesting to observe the way in which he tries to link the particularity of Jewish experience to the broader themes favoured by the government. Focussing on the Jewish Holocaust, he argues, provides a 'springboard for a wide-ranging meditation on persecution and

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[117] Howard Jacobson: Holocaust day is 'all so Blairite', cited online at: www.spiked-online.com
[118] Why is Holocaust Memorial Day relevant to me? Cited online at: www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk/2004/sections/aims/index.asp
[119] Mark Oliver, Holocaust Memorial Day, The Guardian, Friday January 26 2001.

mass murder'. At the same time Britain should remember the Jewish Holocaust specifically, because firstly:

> It is part of our history. Jews fleeing Nazism found refuge here: they and their descendants are part of British life. On the other hand, British forces blocked Jewish refugees from finding safety in Palestine. The RAF didn't try to bomb Auschwitz.

And secondly because: 'The Holocaust is a defining event of the twentieth century. It happened because a modern, democratic, cultured, industrial society, like our own, slid into barbarism.[120] Elsewhere he has been at pains to emphasise the connection he sees between the particularity of the Jewish experience and its wider relevance to other groups who have and are suffering persecution:

> Thanks to Holocaust Memorial Day, communities have discovered former refugees in their midst and unearthed histories of local activism on behalf of those seeking a haven from oppression. These memories have provoked questions about the way British society and the state behaved in the 1930s, and inevitably, how we act today towards refugees and asylum seekers. When the day is rooted in the national calendar it will have succeeded and, hopefully, Britain will become a more responsible and truly diverse country.[121]

What is not convincing about this argument is why the Holocaust rather than any other example of genocide should be made the sole symbolic representation for all other peoples, times and places.

Cesarani's argument has not avoided political controversy since other victims of persecution have felt excluded by his focus on the fate of the Jewish people. The exclusion of the Armenian genocide (when other genocides such as that in Rwanda or Bosnia were included) was interpreted by Nick Cohen in The Observer as a political manoeuvre to appease Turkey who was reported to have: 'threatened to expel US troops from its territory if the American Congress described the carnage as "genocide"'.[122] He concluded somewhat scathingly that:

> The BBC and the Home Office will invite us to reflect on the beastliness of the Germans... [but] the Foreign Office has insisted and the BBC has accepted, that there should be no tactless mention of Turkey's genocide of the Armenians... the mass slaughter that inspired Hitler.[123]

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[120] David Cesarani, 'Why we need a Holocaust Memorial Day', cited online at: http://www.soton.ac.uk/~newrep/vol17/17-5/story12.htm
[121] David Cesarani, 'The Past is not dead, it is not even past', The Guardian, Tuesday November 19 2002.
[122] Nick Cohen, 'Is it Hair or Blague?' The Observer, Sunday December 31.
[123] Ibid.

The issue of the inclusion or exclusion of reference to the fate of the Armenians in Turkey in 1917 has proved to be particularly troubling and the Campaign For the Recognition of the Armenian Genocide was quick to criticise the response of the Home Office's Department of Racial Equality to its complaint in 2000 which stated that evidence about the fate of the Armenians still consists largely of allegations.[124] The difficulty of inclusion was further illustrated by the objections of the Muslim Council of Britain who had:

> expressed its unwillingness to attend Sunday's Holocaust Memorial National Day ceremony... [because] in its present form the ceremony excludes and ignores ongoing genocide and human rights abuses around the world and in the Occupied Territories of Palestine.[125]

There is nevertheless a legitimate question that can be raised here concerning the focus of Holocaust Memorial Day in that it has become a platform for a bewildering variety of other causes. For example, the Jubilee Campaign used Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001 to highlight the plight of the Karen, Karenni and Shan peoples of Burma, and to promote their letter writing campaign.[126] Some Jewish Socialist and campaign groups for the rights of asylum seekers used Holocaust Memorial Day in 2003 to picket the offices of The Daily Mail, who they claimed was leading a 'war on refugees and immigrants.'[127] The attitude of The Daily Mail to Jewish refugees in the 1930s was cited as evidence of their institutionalised racism. This is not to suggest that these are not worthy causes, but the links between these and a Holocaust Memorial Day are certainly tentative.

This problem is also evident in the desire to make the Holocaust relevant to new generations born long after the events. It is possible that this is one of the reasons Holocaust Memorial Day has a different 'theme' each year. So far, it has focussed on 'Lessons for the Future', 'Britain and the Holocaust', 'Children and the Holocaust' and 'From the Holocaust to Rwanda'. This focussing has the positive effect of providing a context, relevant to society today, for understanding the Holocaust. This context can be updated and remodelled each year so that relevance is maintained. If it remains relevant, it is less likely to be ignored or received

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[124] Cited online at: http://www.tiscali.co.uk/cragsite/HDMPage.htm
[125] 'Holocaust Memorial Ceremony – MCB Regrets Exclusion of Palestinian Tragedy', The Muslim Council of Britain press release, 25 January 2002, cited online at: www.mcb.org.uk/250102.html
[126] 'Holocaust Memorial Day – Have We Learned From Past Tragedies?' Jubilee Campaign press release, 31 January 2001, cited online at: www.jubileecampaign.co.uk/world/bur58.htm
[127] 'Say No to the Daily Mail's War on refugees and Immigrants' Report by Charlie Pottins, published on 22 January 2003, cited online at: http://labournet.net/antiracism/0301/mail1.html

apathetically, and this understanding of its universal significance is acknowledged as important by both Roth and Wollaston. This does mean, however, that there is an increased danger of the Holocaust becoming merely a symbol for everything that could go wrong when democracy fails and apathy reigns.

This concern links up with a wider fear about the diminishing effectiveness of Holocaust Memorial Day. The possibility of Holocaust Memorial Day being forgotten or received with general indifference was a concern from the outset. One senior rabbi feared that 'the National Holocaust Memorial Day could turn out to be a "massive own goal" for Jews', with interest diminishing over the years leading to 'apathy' and 'a message of indifference'.[128] This rabbi was not alone in having these concerns. As Professor Aubrey Newman comments:

> I wonder if I may make a parallel without giving offence, and that is a parallel with the high waves of emotion that welled up on the death of the Princess of Wales. In the first year 'Diana Day' was remembered, and now to a large extent it has died away... I hope that Holocaust Memorial Day will not die away as well.[129]

A more serious charge that has been widely aired is that not only will the commemoration cease to be effective but that it actually does a great deal of harm. This case is strikingly similar to that aired by Finkelstein in America and has been put with something of the same vehemence. According to Will Hutton writing in The Observer in January 2001, Holocaust Memorial Day serves to obscure the fact that Britain has had its own history of murderous persecution of the Jews:

> None of this, however, will be remembered on 27 January even though the statement of purpose that accompanies the holocaust memorial day says it provides an opportunity 'to examine our nation's past and learn for the future'. If you visit the Holocaust Memorial Day website...the remembrance around the country is entirely focussed on the Holocaust with the scarcely subliminal message it was perpetrated by Germans, as is the education pack issued by the department of Education. As for the London pogrom – that was 900 years ago, so we can forget that.[130]

Hutton concludes:

> The explicit message is that the crazed mix of eugenics, anti-Semitism and barbarism were and are unique to Germans and Germany, rather than something common to all European culture and something which we all must

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[128] Victoria Combe, 'Holocaust Day bad for Jews, says rabbi', The Telegraph, 20 January 2001.
[129] Professor Aubrey Newman, Whose Holocaust is it?' An address for National Holocaust Memorial Day, 27 January 2001, cited online at: www.le.ac.uk/hi/centres/burton/pubs/pdf/whose.pdf
[130] Will Hutton, 'We all have blood on our hands', The Observer, 21 January 2001.

> face...And of course the Israeli lobby will be quietly happy – remembrance cast like this is a powerful relegitimisation of the case for a Jewish state, notwithstanding its own endemic racism.[131]

What statements like this make abundantly clear is that the concerns and academic controversies raised and sustained by academics such as Bauer, Finkelstein, Cole and Wollaston have not been confined to the pages of scholarly publications but are part of the currency of wider debate in England about Holocaust Memorial Day and more generally about how problematic the study and teaching of the Holocaust has become.

Conclusion

From this discussion of the evolution of Holocaust studies and their impact on public attitudes over the past thirty years it is hard not to agree with Wollaston's conclusion:

> Today, there is a widespread consensus that we – both as a society and as individuals – have an obligation to remember the Holocaust... Yet at the same time as this widespread commitment to active remembrance, there have been a series of bitter controversies over questions of memory, remembrance and representation... What we remember and how we remember is influenced by a whole series of factors, such as nationality, religious background, political affiliation, class, gender, age and so on... It is becoming increasingly apparent that today the Holocaust can 'mean' just about anything.[132]

Yet for her this need not lead to a rejection of Holocaust studies provided the reality of the situation is understood and accepted:

> The challenge is to find a way of speaking about the Holocaust that both acknowledges this plurality and is open to understanding each 'version' on its own terms, while also articulating a methodology that allows ethical judgements to be made about the contents or consequences of particular 'versions' of the Holocaust. To acknowledge the existence of a variety of 'versions' of the Holocaust is not to advocate a weak pluralism in which 'anything goes'. Rather it is to argue that such plurality is the context in which any attempt to remember the Holocaust takes place.[133]

Nor does she reject the educational and ethical value of researching and teaching about the Holocaust, but once again urges us against adopting too complacent and superficial a view of what this task entails:

> It seems apparent that 'never again' is a deceptively simple assertion masking a range of assumptions and intentions. One such assumption concerns the need

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[131] Ibid.
[132] Isabel Wollaston, Auschwitz and the Politics of Commemoration, p. 1.
[133] Ibid., p. 89.

> for *active* remembrance: it is necessary to make a conscious effort to know what happened, and then communicate that knowledge to others... A related assumption underlying 'never again' is the hope that education sensitises people... For many Holocaust education is the most effective *active* form of remembrance... We must ask, however, whether such bold claims are anything more than empty rhetoric. *What* is never to happen again, and to *whom* should it never happen?[134]

From an American perspective John Roth also remains fundamentally optimistic about the value of teaching the subject - and this is despite his own bitter personal experience of the politicisation of the subject which lead him in 1998 not to take up the post of Director of the Centre for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the new United States Holocaust Memorial Museum after accusations of pro-Palestinian bias were made against him in sections of the media.[135] Given his own experience, Roth is particularly sensitive to attempts by any group to claim exclusive ownership of the Holocaust even though he is at pains to emphasise the centrality of the Jewish experience to any understanding of what occurred:

> Remember that the Holocaust targeted a particular people, the Jews, first and foremost. Consequently, the preciousness of all human life and the homes it requires, the highest qualities of goodness, and even God were assaulted as well.[136]

This desire to balance the particular and the universal leads him to the conclusion:

> Who owns the Holocaust? There does not seem to be an adequate response to that question. Sometimes if a question does not have an adequate answer, we might conclude that something is wrong with the question.[137]

Roth goes on to argue that the Holocaust, like other historical events, cannot be owned in the same way as we own a car or a house. Instead, he suggests a more subtle and morally sensitive use of the term:

> To own something can mean not to possess it but to acknowledge or admit a reality for what it was and is. One can own a mistake, to offer a very simple example, by admitting it. Or one can own a fault in the sense of acknowledging it. In related but far more profound senses, the Holocaust and its burdens could be owned in these ways. They could be owned by Jews, Germans, Christians, scholars and others not identically, but in ways that might be related and, at times, complementary.[138]

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[134] Ibid., p. 9.
[135] Roth, Holocaust Politics, pp. 22-26.
[136] Ibid., p. 283.
[137] Ibid., p. 41.
[138] Ibid., p. 43.

Influenced by recent debates about history and collective memory, he is also aware of the fragility and transience of all forms of human remembrance, which leads him to ponder the future of Holocaust education:

> I wonder where this effort will lead, given the fact that, in one way or another, memory loss is not only inevitable but widespread in human experience and that for all but a few, the passion of human attention is focussed on what happens in the present or what may happen in the future much more than on what happened in the past.[139]

Yet ultimately, like Wollaston, Roth's view of the future of Holocaust education is one of guarded optimism. Whilst recognising that it 'remains an unmastered trauma'[140] he insists that: 'We study the Holocaust because it happened, but not only for that reason. We study it and teach about it primarily for ethical reasons that are rooted in deep longing for a safer and more humane world.'[141] The principal task for Holocaust politics is to increase respect for human life and to 'mend the world'.[142] With this in mind, he asserts that Holocaust politics can be a means of achieving higher goods, 'to teach about the Holocaust and to learn from it – this is the ethical calling of Holocaust education and the responsibility of Holocaust politics.[143]

What this chapter has suggested most strongly is that to lament the contested nature of Holocaust studies and their impact upon the teaching of the subject is to miss the point. There is no one purely objective standpoint from which the past can be understood. As Keith Jenkins says: 'the past as history always has been and always will be necessarily configured, troped, emplotted, read, mythologised and ideologised in ways to suit ourselves'.[144] As Wollaston argues, recognition of this plurality of 'versions of the Holocaust' provides the necessary context for any meaningful engagement with the Holocaust. The American historian Peter Novick, far from bewailing the politicisation of the subject contends that:

> The politicising of the memory of the Holocaust is often deplored. But collective memory, when it is consequential, when it is worthy of the name, is characteristically an arena of political contestation in which competing narratives about central symbols in the collective past, and the collectivity's relationship to that past, are disputed and negotiated in the interest of redefining the collective present.[145]

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[139] Ibid., p. 130.
[140] Ibid., p. 3.
[141] Ibid., p. 279.
[142] Ibid., p. 31.
[143] Ibid., p. 284.
[144] Keith Jenkins, Why History? Ethics and Postmodernity, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 3.
[145] P. Novick The Holocaust and Collective Memory, (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), p. 279.

Michael Marrus makes a similar point when he suggests that while the work of distinguished historians should be viewed with esteem, new directions should always be sought and an "official orthodoxy" should be rejected.[146] Such an approach may make teachers and pupils more sensitive to the ways in which public memory is constructed and sustained and therefore, become a valuable educational tool. However, the extent to which this is happening in secondary education remains to be considered later.

It is hard to escape from the sense that one central dilemma is not so easily overcome. The tension between current views of the uniqueness and the universality of the Holocaust, or to put this another way between a Jewish focussed as opposed to a eugenically defined notion of the Holocaust is not easy to resolve and is likely to have important pedagogic implications. As I have indicated, my own preference is to adopt the kind of approach favoured by Michael Burleigh. This is because to emphasise the uniqueness of the Holocaust in terms of Jewish experience is too restrictive. Many aspects of the Holocaust cannot be given full consideration because they do not fit easily into such an interpretative framework. As John Fox argues:

> To understand the full import of those events... it is essential to go beyond the narrow focus on the Jewish victims of Nazism... One must take into account the interaction of man in history as a biological, psychological and social creature to understand fully those factors, which make any form of human destructiveness, including the case of the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews, entirely possible.[147]

The Holocaust was more than an example of extreme racism or anti-Semitism and as such there is a great deal that can be learnt from it. While tolerance and the evils of anti-Semitism are central lessons to be derived from studying the Holocaust, they are essentially meaningless if the *reasons* for intolerance and anti-Semitism are not understood. The attempted extermination of a people did not occur in a vacuum. It involved more peoples and a denser ideological background than is often currently acknowledged. Ultimately, study of the Holocaust should highlight a number of important issues including the need for accountable political structures, the practice of genetic engineering, the dangers of religious intolerance, and the treatment of ethnic and other minorities within the community. Yet I am conscious that there is a very real danger that the Holocaust will become all things to all people, loosing its historical context and becoming the standard example of racism, prejudice,

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[146] Michael R. Marrus, 'The Holocaust: Where we are, where we need to go – a comment', pp. 31-32.
[147] John Fox, 'The Holocaust, a non-unique event for all humanity', in Remembering for the Future, vol. 3, p. 1872.

intolerance, dictatorship, propaganda, or public indifference to evil. How schools are coping with this dilemma and how they might address it in the future will also be a subject to consider when discussing the evidence of teachers.

Chapter Three: The Context of Holocaust Education in Schools.

Before presenting and analysing the research data obtained from questionnaires and interviews with a group of teachers engaged in Holocaust education in secondary schools, it is necessary to understand and evaluate the legislative context in which their work is undertaken, and that is the purpose of the present chapter. Such a procedure will also be helpful in assessing the extent to which governmental educational policy in this area is actually translated into practice on the ground. This chapter begins by examining the legislative framework in which Holocaust education is undertaken in state secondary schools. It then seeks to bring out the underlying assumptions about the purpose of such education as defined in government publications and in the literature surrounding the creation of a specific Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain. The latter source has been analysed since although it does not relate directly to the National Curriculum, it does provide a particularly clear statement about the government's thinking on the purposes of Holocaust education and one that is consonant with the philosophy embodied in the National Curriculum. Finally the chapter presents a critical assessment of some of the problems raised by this governmental framework.

The National Curriculum in England and Wales

The National Curriculum was introduced in 1988 as an essential part of the Education Reform Act of that year which one scholar in the field has called, 'the most important and far-reaching piece of educational law-making for England and Wales since the Education Act of 1944.'[1] The National Curriculum was designed to provide schools with strict guidelines concerning programmes of study and attainment targets. In so doing the Act sought to impose a uniform national standard in all maintained schools in the U.K. Power over the curriculum was centralised in the hands of the Secretary of State to an extent not previously seen in British state education, thereby reducing the decision-making role of local authorities, parent/teacher associations and community representatives.

The National Curriculum consists of core and foundation subjects. The core subjects are, mathematics, English and science and for Welsh speaking schools, Welsh. The foundation subjects are History, geography, technology, music, art and physical education. For key stages three and four taken between the ages of eleven

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[1] Stuart Maclure, (ed.), Education Re-Formed, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), p. v.

and sixteen, a modern foreign language[2] is added and Welsh for schools in Wales that are not Welsh speaking.[3] Schools are legally obliged to teach these subjects during the appropriate key stage, but, it is at the discretion of the individual school precisely when the subject is introduced.

In addition to the introduction of core and foundation subjects, the Secretary of State through his or her officials also specifies attainment targets, programmes of study and means of assessment for each subject. The implementation of the National Curriculum and the monitoring of its various aspects fell to three specially created bodies, the National Curriculum Council (NCC), the Curriculum Council for Wales and the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC). Membership of these councils was also determined by the Secretary of State. Orders were then drawn up for each subject covering attainment targets, programmes of study and arrangement for assessment. The process for acceptance of these Orders is explained in the Act and Maclure summarises this as follows:

> The Act is at pains to describe the process by which the Secretary of State is to arrive at his curriculum Orders, the documents which he must lay before Parliament for a positive resolution in both Houses. Any proposals have to be referred to the appropriate Curriculum Council. The Council then puts them out for consultation with local authorities, teachers' bodies, representatives of governing bodies and 'any other persons' thought to be worth consulting. The Council then reports back to the Secretary of State, summarising the views of those consulted and making its own recommendations. The Council can also add any other advice it thinks fit. The Secretary of State is then obliged to publish the Curriculum Council's report. He does not have to accept the advice, but if he fails to do so he must state his reasons for setting it aside. He then issues his draft Order, after which there has to be yet another period of at least a month for further consultation and representations from interested groups.[4]

Working Groups were established for each subject and these presented their findings in the consultation part of the process. The Working Groups were again composed of members chosen by the Secretary of State. John Slater describes the composition of the Working Group for History:

> [It included] the Chairman, ten full time members of the Group and two subsequent secondments... They included a Director of Education, a Chairman of a County Council, a Senior Adviser, two university historians and two teacher trainers. There were two teachers, one each from the primary and secondary sectors. Some other members of the Group had regular contact with pupils in

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[2] Since writing this chapter the government have announced that foreign languages are to be removed from the list of compulsory subjects.
[3] Key stages are defined precisely in section 355(1) of the Education Act 1996. The key stages are; key stage 1 - ages 5 to 7 (year groups 1-2) key stage 2 – ages 7 to 11 (year groups 3–6) key stage 3 – ages 11 to 14 (year groups 7-9) and key stage 4 – ages 14 to 16 (year groups 10-11).
[4] Maclure, (ed.) Education Re-Formed, pp. 9-10.

> classes and others had impressive and recent teaching experience. Three were women. All were white. The Group was serviced and advised by an able team of civil servants and the Staff Inspector for History, who was described as an 'observer'.[5]

The whole process of consultation through the National Councils and the Working Groups was clearly not designed to limit debate nor stifle dissent, but the overriding powers of the Secretary of State and the influential role of educational civil servants were sufficient to embed a clearly defined set of pedagogic assumptions and objectives within the state school curriculum.

The National Curriculum is applicable 'to pupils of compulsory school age in community and foundation schools, including community special schools and foundation special schools, and voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools."[6] Its underlying aims are set out in the government's National Curriculum Handbook for Teachers in England and Wales:

> The two broad aims for the school curriculum are reflected in section 51 of the Education Act 1996, which requires that all maintained schools provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum that:
> - promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society
> - prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life
>
> The Act requires the Secretary of State, local authorities and the governing body and headteacher to take steps to achieve these requirements. The Secretary of State meets his responsibilities in this area by providing a national framework, which incorporates the National Curriculum, Religious Education and other statutory requirements. This framework is designed to enable all schools to respond effectively to national and local priorities, to meet the individual learning needs of all pupils and to develop a distinctive character and ethos rooted in their local communities.[7]

In addition to this very broad statement of purpose the National Curriculum has four main aims. Firstly, to establish an entitlement to a number of areas of learning and the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes necessary for self fulfilment and personal development; secondly, to establish standards through the monitoring of attainment targets on a comparative national basis; thirdly, to promote continuity and coherence, through a pupil's entire education; and fourthly to promote public understanding of the role and achievements of schools.

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[5] John Slater, 'History in the National Curriculum the final report of the History Working Group', in Richard Aldrich, (ed.), History in the National Curriculum, (London: Kogan Page, 1991), p. 12.
[6] The National Curriculum Handbook for Secondary Teachers in England, (London: Department for Education and Employment, 1999), p. 16.
[7] Ibid., p. 12.

For the purposes of this thesis we need to take particular note of the importance attached to the promotion of the spiritual and moral development of both pupils and of society more generally since it is within this framework that Holocaust education has most often sought its justification.

The Place of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum

Following the process described above, academics, teachers and other interested parties[8] lobbied the Working Group for the inclusion of the Holocaust in the Orders for History[9]. In 1990, when the final report was published, the Holocaust became a compulsory section mentioned specifically as a component of study within the subject defined as 'the Era of the Second World War; 1933-1948.'

Today, the Holocaust remains a compulsory component of study in key stage 3 (11-14 year olds) History under the rubric 'A World Study After 1900. A study of some of the significant individuals, events and developments from across the twentieth century, including the two World Wars, the Holocaust, the Cold War, and their impact on Britain, Europe and the wider world.'[10] Its specific place within the curriculum is described as follows:

> This unit is an in-depth study which links directly to the preceding unit 18 'Twentieth-century conflicts'. It builds on work about culture clashes in earlier units. It also acts as an introduction to the teaching of several issues relating to citizenship and democracy.[11]

The purpose of this unit, described by the Department for Education is that:

> In this unit pupils learn about how and why the Holocaust happened. Its main emphasis is developing pupils' understanding of historical concepts, such as cause and consequence, and their ability in higher order 'thinking skills'.

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[8] The interested parties included individuals and organizations. The Holocaust Education Trust and the Wiener Library for example lobbied extensively for the inclusion of the Holocaust.

[9] The lobbying of the Working Groups was subject to criticism, as some argued that this resulted in the inclusion of subjects that would not necessarily have been given a place in the Orders otherwise. On the flip side of this is the assumption that some subjects may have been given a place at the expense of other equally valuable subjects.

[10] The National Curriculum, p. 152.

[11] History at Key Stage 3 where the unit fits in, cited online at: http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary_history/his19/224354?view=get

Included in this description are some recommendations for the approach teachers should take:

> Teachers are strongly advised to follow the guidance on selecting of suitable materials for this subject, contained throughout the 'Points to note'.
>
> Care will need to be taken to be sensitive to pupils who may find aspects of this unit deeply upsetting.
>
> This unit is expected to take 8-11 hours.[12]

In addition to the inclusion of the Holocaust in the National Curriculum, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, who are responsible for the content of the subjects within the National Curriculum) issue Schemes of Work (available for most subjects), to assist and guide teachers.[13] The Schemes of Work for the unit on the Holocaust concentrate specifically upon the persecution of the Jews. Under 'Objectives pupils should learn' are a series of questions such as:

> Rights and responsibilities?
>
> - Rights denied: Why was Anne Frank forced to go into hiding?
> - Rights denied: how did Nazi persecution of the Jews develop?
> - How and why were ghettos set up and what was life like inside them?
> - What was the Final Solution?
> - What happened when people found out about the Holocaust?
> - Exploring the Holocaust – what questions and issues remain?
> - How and why did the Holocaust happen?[14]

It is clear from these questions that the intention it to examine the Holocaust primarily in relation to its Jewish victims. There is, however, also the opportunity to 'unpack pupils' misconceptions… e.g. all new arrivals were gassed, only Jews were deported and exterminated, all "concentration camps" were "death camps",' and also

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[12] History at Key Stage 3 about this unit, cited online at: http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary_history/his19/?view=get

[13] The QCA replaced the original bodies NCC and SEAC.

[14] History in Key Stage Three sections in this unit, cited online at: http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary_history/his19/?view=get

to examine 'Hitler's racist ideas.'[15] The expectation is that at the end of the unit:

> Most pupils will: show knowledge of how and why the Holocaust happened including the chronology of the Holocaust and the way the persecution of Jewish people developed over time; describe some of the ideas and attitudes underpinning the Nazi persecution of the Jews and other groups; make critical and thoughtful use of a range of sources of information about the Holocaust, including ICT[16]; select, organise and use relevant information in structured explanations of the Holocaust.[17]

Two issues deserve to be noted from this brief exposition of the aims and methods of Holocaust education within the key stage 3 History curriculum. Firstly, some attempt is made to address the question of particularist and more specifically Jewish interpretations of the Holocaust versus the more recent trend in Holocaust research to emphasise the universal implications of Nazi racism and eugenics. How far such complex issues can in the words of the Schemes of Work be successfully 'unpacked' by pupils at this level is open to question and will be considered in the discussion of the research data from schools. Secondly, one sees in the Orders for History teaching that whilst the primary emphasis is naturally upon the analysis and comprehension of historical events in their own context, the earlier and broader objectives of spiritual and moral development underpinning the National Curriculum have been translated here into the more specific teaching of issues relating to citizenship and democracy. Here again one would want to see in practice whether this is achievable and also to question the assumption that the Holocaust is necessarily the most effective way of inculcating liberal and democratic beliefs and practices.

The Study of the Holocaust in Addition to Curriculum Requirements.

The Holocaust as a subject for study within schools is not confined to History lessons. There is evidence that many English departments include it and some examination boards for this subject as well as those for German and Art give it a

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[15] How and why did the Holocaust happen? Possible Activities. Taken from: www.standards.dfee.go.uk/schemes2/secondary_history/his19/?view=activities. This was a point further clarified by Graeme Curry from the Curriculum Division of the QCA, in a letter dated 8 August 2001. He explained that "Although the focus of the unit is on the treatment of the Jews... it is worth pointing out that teachers are encouraged during the unit to 'remind pupils, as appropriate, that Nazi persecution was not just of Jews, but of other minorities, eg gypsies, homosexuals.'"

[16] Information Communication Technology.

[17] Schemes of Work: History at Key Stage 3 essential information about this unit, cited online at: http://www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary_history/his19/?view=essential

place at both G.C.S.E and A'level.[18] However, Religious Education (RE) is often held to be a particularly appropriate place to include the Holocaust. While Christianity forms the principal focus for all key stages, the opportunity for studying Judaism is also presented and the Holocaust naturally looms large in any understanding of contemporary Jewish belief and practice. The teaching of ethics in a religious context can also provide a further rationale for discussion of the Holocaust. One of the aims of RE is that children 'learn about religious and ethical teaching, enabling them to make reasoned and informed judgements on religious and moral issues'.[19]

Religious Education is not included in the National Curriculum, although it is a legal requirement as stated in the 1944 Education Act. Unlike the subjects covered by the National Curriculum there is no nationally agreed syllabus or regular testing.[20] The syllabus for RE is the responsibility of the Local Education Authority (LEA) which together with teachers, councillors and religious representatives, produces an Agreed Syllabus for the area based on recommendations from the QCA. As with History, the QCA does provide Schemes of Work and these are presented as a possible aid to the Agreed Syllabus and the wording given by the QCA indicates an awareness of the variety of RE lessons and the position of RE generally: 'This scheme shows how a locally agreed syllabus for RE for key stage 3 can be translated into manageable units of work. The scheme is not statutory; you can use as much or as little as you wish. You could use the whole scheme or individual units'.[21] And as an examination of the documentation concerning one local Agreed Syllabus, which is relevant to this study, makes clear, local independence is in practice tempered by a national framework of legislation:

> Nationally, it is a requirement for schools to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The Schools Standards and Framework Act 1999 requires that an agreed syllabus should reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.[22]

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[18] In the above mentioned letter from Graeme Curry, he advised me that the English Team had replied with the following: 'The statutory requirements in English include 'texts from different cultures and traditions'. In both Speaking and Listening and in Reading there are requirements about bias, ambiguity and different viewpoints which could be relevant... as they offer opportunities, but there are no specific references to Holocaust.' See also Nicholas McGuinn, 'Teaching the Holocaust through English', in Ian Davies (ed.), Teaching the Holocaust, pp. 119-134.

[19] RE at Key Stage 3 teaching RE at Key Stage 3, cited online at: http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary_RE/teaching?view=get

[20] RE is subject to OFSTED inspections and as such it must meet the standards set by the QCA.

[21] RE at Key Stage 3 what is this scheme of work, cited online at: http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary_RE/?view=get

[22] Thinking Together Swindon Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, April 2000.

In theory at least, the RE Agreed Syllabus allows for the religious diversity of each area to be reflected within RE lessons in schools,[23] for example 'at key stage 1 the principal focus is on Christianity and schools will choose which other faith to include depending upon their representation within the school's community.'[24] As the Swindon Agreed syllabus makes clear, there is also provision for topical issues to be covered and hence for the syllabus to evolve: 'Regardless of earlier faiths studied, all students will focus on two half-term units from the perspective of Islam because of its current political significance and the need to understand its impact globally.'[25]

There is considerable evidence that many RE departments choose to include study of the Holocaust at some point. This can often be in relation to the development of the Jewish and/or Christian religious tradition, when discussing justice, as an example of religious prejudice, or as an area for discussion when tackling questions concerning suffering or the existence and nature of God. But the general mechanisms for controlling this subject area remain less prescriptive than in the case of History teaching. The scope available to RE teachers is a point discussed by Sue Foster and Carrie Mercier:

> In establishing learning outcomes or objectives in any area of the curriculum, teachers are looking for knowledge and understanding of key concepts and the development of certain skills and attitudes. In Religious Education students are expected to develop their understanding of important religious concepts. The locally agreed syllabus will give guidance to teachers on key concepts for each world religion as well as on general concepts that cross the boundaries of the different faiths. Within a programme of study on Christianity, for example, the concepts of grace, sin, salvation and resurrection might be listed and within Judaism, the concepts of covenant, Torah, kosher and Shoah/Holocaust would be included. General concepts in RE would include for example the sacred or holy, revelation, worship, ritual, thanksgiving, sin and forgiveness.[26]

Another specific example of this can be found in the QCA Schemes of Work. In a unit on suffering the QCA make the following suggestion, which is open to extremely broad interpretations: 'This whole unit could be investigated through a modern example of suffering'[27] so this could be the Holocaust, or, as the QCA suggest, Dunblane. As a consequence, the way in which the Holocaust is used in RE syllabuses appears to be surprisingly varied. More so

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[23] An example of this is that the choice of religions to be studied can be tailored to reflect a schools particular ethnic make up, i.e. Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism can all be studied in addition to Christianity, Islam and Judaism.
[24] Thinking Together, p. ii.
[25] Ibid., p. iv.
[26] Sue Foster and Carrie Mercier, 'Teaching the Holocaust Through Religious Education', in Ian Davies (ed.) Teaching the Holocaust, pp. 152-153.
[27] RE at Key Stage 3 why do we suffer? Cited online at:
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/secondary_RE/rel9c/rel9cq1?view=get

than in the case of History, teachers have extensive scope to interpret the aims of Holocaust education according to their own individual perspectives and the ethos of the school in which they work.

This is a situation which may change in the future. There is a possibility that RE will become more standardized:

> In England, we are currently experiencing renewed debate concerning the place of Religious Education (RE) in the school curriculum. The debate has been stimulated by developments designed to rationalize provision by providing a national framework for Religious Education that can promote good practice... and providing high quality resources when each local area may have a different syllabus for the subject.[28]

If steps were taken to standardize RE, assuming that it remained within the school curriculum, the place of the Holocaust within RE may need establishing in much the same manner as it was established within History and there is of course no guarantee that it will have any place at all.

Holocaust Memorial Day

As I discussed earlier, the creation of a Holocaust Memorial Day had the primary purpose of '[ensuring] that the horrendous crimes against humanity committed during the Holocaust are never forgotten, and its relevance for each generation is understood.'[29] The statement went on to outline key issues, which were to determine the aims and objectives of a Holocaust Memorial Day and these aims and objectives were chosen so that they could be easily applied in schools. The overtly political nature of this act of national remembrance was directed in large part towards schools. Education packs were produced specifically for this purpose[30] and the Department for Education and Employment provides all schools with a pack, which, according to the opening statement from the Secretary of State, aims to:

> Heighten awareness and understanding of the relevance of the Holocaust. It is important that our children learn about how and why the Holocaust happened and about the victims of Nazi persecution. We must be vigilant and learn the lessons of the Holocaust if we are to prevent future tragedies. Even in a democracy such as ours, racism and bigotry can claim victims. We must ensure that our children understand the value of diversity and tolerance to help achieve

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[28] Editorial, in The British Journal of Religious Education, vol. 26, No. 2, June 2004.
[29] Government Proposal for a Holocaust Remembrance Day, Home Office Press Release, October 1999, p.1, cited online at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/reu/hdrem.htm
[30] Holocaust Memorial Day Remembering Genocides Lessons for the Future Education Pack, 2000.

> a society free from prejudice and racism in which all members have a sense of belonging.[31]

This pack, like the syllabus for the History National Curriculum, aims to address the particularist understanding of the Holocaust as well as promoting many moral and ethical issues. The victims mentioned include a wide range of groups persecuted by the Nazis: Roma and Sinti, Black people, Slavs, the disabled, homosexuals, ideological opponents and Jehovah's Witnesses as well as Jews. Direct comparisons are made between these victims and the experiences of Tutsi and Bosnian refugees. The pack is recommended so that: 'teachers can integrate the themes highlighted in the pack into their planning in History, English, RE, Personal Social Health Education (PHSE) and citizenship. The materials may be used at the beginning of a relevant scheme of work or to round it off.'[32]

It is necessary to stress that Holocaust Memorial Day cannot be observed in place of the required module in History and it was not intended to replace the History module. Any observation of the day is wholly optional. While time is available within schools for this and other 'non-curricula' activities, participation in this is entirely at the discretion of each school. Its importance lies in providing the most comprehensive and explicit description of the assumptions and objectives that underpin what the government hopes to achieve by Holocaust education in schools. In the original proposal these were said to be:

- To raise awareness and understanding of the events of the Holocaust as a continuing issue for all humanity based on a recognition that it could happen again anywhere and at any time, unless we ensure that our society is vigilant in opposing racism.
- To highlight the values of a tolerant and diverse society based upon the notions of universal dignity and equal rights and responsibilities for all its citizens.
- To provide a national mark of respect for all victims of Nazi persecution and demonstrate understanding with all those who still suffer its consequences.
- To reflect on recent atrocities that raise similar issues.
- To commemorate the communities who suffered as a result of the Holocaust.
- To ensure that the historical events associated with the Holocaust continue to be regarded as being of fundamental importance.
- To educate subsequent generations about the Holocaust and the continued relevance of the lessons that are learnt from it.
- To assert a continuing commitment to oppose racism, antisemitism, victimisation and genocide.[33]

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[31] Ibid., p. 1.
[32] Ibid., p. 4.
[33] Ibid., p. 3.

Once the date had been selected, these aims and objectives were carried through into the final Statement of Purpose, which in addition to the points listed above included the following aims:

- To recognise that the Holocaust was a tragically defining episode of the twentieth century, a crisis for European civilisation and a universal catastrophe for humanity.
- To provide an opportunity to examine our nation's past and learn for the future.
- To promote a democratic and tolerant society, free of the evils of prejudice and racism.
- To support the Government's commitment that all citizens – without distinction – should participate freely and fully in the economic, social and public life of the nation.
- To highlight the values of a tolerant and diverse society based upon the notions of universal dignity and equal rights and responsibilities of all its citizens.
- To support our shared aspirations with both our European partners and the wider international community centred on the ideals of peace, justice and community for all.[34]

Some Critical Issues

Throughout this chapter continued reference has been made to the key role of the Secretary of State in defining educational policy and setting priorities. From this it follows that the political climate of the day impacts directly on the study of the Holocaust in schools through the National Curriculum and that the teaching of the topic is subject to change over time, as clearly demonstrated by the introduction of Holocaust Memorial Day and its focus on educational themes. This situation has been widely recognised. Indeed when the original Orders for History were being composed there was intense debate as to the focus and orientation of the teaching of the subject, which led to the Working Group expressing concerns that History teaching was in danger of becoming a propaganda weapon:

> Many people have expressed deep concern that school history will be used as propaganda; that governments of one political hue or another will try to subvert it for the purpose of indoctrination or social engineering. There will always be those who seek to impose a particular view of history through an interpretation of history.[35]

The influence of the political climate was a positive factor for those who

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[34] Holocaust Memorial Day Statement of Purpose, as cited online at: http;//www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk/sections/1/menu.htm
[35] Duncan Graham and David Tytler, A Lesson For Us All, (London: Routledge,1993), p. 67.

advocated studying the Holocaust, as Nicholas Kinloch confirms:

> Many teachers are clear that there are good reasons to teach young people about the Shoah. In this they are supported by the British government, which has been resolute in including its study in successive versions of England's National Curriculum for History. Indeed, initial versions of the revised Orders for History for September 2000 included the Shoah as virtually the only prescribed content. The topic also featured extensively in initial proposals for the introduction of Citizenship.[36]

In the case of the British government, the charge of social engineering appears to have some point. The teaching of the Holocaust is meant to promote the values of a tolerant, pluralist, capitalist, liberal democracy. The rightness of these values is taken to be self-evident and the possibility of dissent from one or more of them precluded. Precisely because the Holocaust is almost universally perceived to be an incontrovertible example of monstrous evil, the association that is made between a particular set of social, economic and political beliefs and the prevention of another Holocaust is a powerfully emotive one. The extent to which teachers are aware of these issues needs further examination.

Even if we were to accept that some or all of the values that the government seeks to inculcate through the teaching of the Holocaust are beneficial ones, the assumption that a historically informed study of these particular events is the best or indeed even a possible way of teaching them remains problematic. Much that happened in the Holocaust was, after all, unredeemed and unredeemable. It was a failure not a triumph for liberal social and political values. Again, it may be the case that the depths of evil revealed in the Holocaust provide pupils with vivid, memorable and engaging material from which lessons can be drawn, but might it not equally be the case that the extreme nature of these events distances them from the present and blunts their impact? This is one of the questions that the data obtained from schools seeks to address.

Concerns about governmental manipulation of Holocaust teaching and the distancing effect that such teaching may actually produce in pupils can in fact be brought together. Although, as we have seen, much emphasis is placed on the fact that the Holocaust or something very like it could happen anywhere and at any time, implicit in the message that the government is seeking to put across is the belief that atrocities of this kind do not happen in tolerant liberal societies such as our own. As a number of commentators have pointed out, focussing on events in another country

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[36] Nicolas Kinloch, 'Parallel catastrophes? Uniqueness, redemption and the Shoah', in Teaching History, Issue 104, September 2001, pp 8-13, 9.

several generations ago as a means of teaching about the evils of racism may be more comfortable than addressing racism in Britain in the present. To put this point in another way, can the teaching of the Holocaust produce results some of which are very different from those stated by the government? Can it glorify our liberal traditions in a dangerously complacent way? Or can it reinforce the belief that anti-Semitism did not exist in Britain? Or can it serve to draw attention to the limits Britain placed on the numbers of immigrants fleeing persecution in the 1930s that we were prepared to help – an issue currently very relevant to British society? One suspects that in the government's mind, some of these less flattering and more awkward subjects are not intended to be the focus of attention.

Perhaps what emerges most strikingly from a study of governmental thinking about Holocaust education is the sheer breadth of expectations placed upon the subject. Even allowing for the inflationary effect of political rhetoric, and for the linking of the topic to others intended to convey the same messages, can the teaching of this one subject in schools really fulfil the formidable array of aims set out above? This is an important consideration since there is some reason for thinking that the study of the Holocaust in schools may continue to increase rather than decrease with a corresponding increase in the weight of expectations placed upon the subject. This can be seen clearly in the introduction of the new subject, citizenship, which from August 2002 became a statutory requirement for key stages three and four. This topic is directly linked to the History unit on the Holocaust in two specified areas:

> - The legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society, basic aspects of the criminal justice system, and how both relate to young people.
> - The world as a global community, and the political, economic, environmental and social implications of this, and the role of the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.[37]

No doubt in teaching about the importance of human rights and the role of institutions such as the United Nations in defending them it is intended that the study of the Holocaust should play only a peripheral role. It might serve as an important historical background explanation for the creation of the United Nations and its charter on genocide and for the development of the Court of Human Rights in The Hague. More generally it will once again serve here as the most egregious example of what the denial of such rights can lead to. Again it needs to be asked whether the

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[37] The National Curriculum Handbook, p. 184.

Holocaust remains today the most compelling and relevant way of teaching these issues. The massacre of civilians in the former Yugoslavia is after all much more recent and just as starkly reveals the need for international co-operation and an active humanitarian concept of citizenship in society.

A further concern arises from the issues of partiality and selectivity of interpretation that we have earlier discussed in general terms under the heading of the politicisation of the Holocaust. As we have seen, it is clear that governmental statements about the aims of Holocaust education and public awareness of the issues it raises reflect an awareness of this problem. Yet the broad brush categories of educational aims such as to oppose racism, anti-Semitism, victimisation and genocide, and even the desire to ensure that children are taught that not all Holocaust victims were Jewish can conceal the extent to which the politics of victim-hood can powerfully shape our understanding of the Holocaust. For example, Jewish organisations such as the Holocaust Education Trust work to influence policy making in the teaching of the Holocaust in schools. Whilst this is done in a perfectly open and proper manner, it should alert us to the far from value-free process by which teaching materials about the Holocaust are produced. There is evidence that these broad governmental categories and the political implications of them, are impacting upon education and for some commentators this breadth of aims and expectations is a cause for concern:

> There seems general agreement that in studying the Shoah, students should be encouraged to examine their own attitudes to minorities, and to racism in their own society more generally. More specifically, it is claimed that the study of the Shoah will itself help to make any repetition of the Nazi genocide less likely. This approach is often endorsed by the textbooks teachers use.[38]

In addition to this, if teaching about the victimisation of non-Jewish groups is deemed to be important can it, for example, accommodate the research contained in books such as The Pink Triangle[39] and Days of Masquerade[40] that were products of the gay liberation movement of the 1960s which has sought to impose its own very distinctive perspective on the nature and significance of the Holocaust?

One further comment of a related kind also needs to be made. In all of the government's educational literature there is an emphasis on the universal

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[38] Nicholas Kinloch, 'Parallel Catastrophes', p. 9.
[39] Richard Plant, The Pink Triangle. The Nazi War Against Homosexuals, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1987).
[40] Claudia Schoppmann, Days of Masquerade, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

significance of the Holocaust for humanity, though interestingly the statement of aims for the setting up of Holocaust Memorial Day does refer to the Holocaust as both a crisis for European civilisation and a crisis for humanity. Yet from a non-European perspective it is far from clear that the Holocaust should automatically be accorded such universal significance. Eurocentrism may be one further example of the partiality of perspectives inherent in Holocaust education. Again, it could be asked how appropriate a topic it is for the transmission of fundamental humanitarian values in Britain's multi-faith and multi-cultural society.

As this chapter has tried to indicate, the teaching of the Holocaust in British secondary schools comes burdened with a heavy weight of governmental expectations and biases. These in turn raise problematic questions about the way in which the subject should be taught or indeed whether it is desirable to do so at all. In the next two chapters we will assess the evidence of questionnaires and in-depth interviews with teachers to see how far they are aware of these issues, and in what ways they impact upon their approaches to teaching the subject.

Chapter Four: Analysis of the Questionnaires.

As stated earlier, the questionnaires were issued in order to build up a basic 'picture' of Holocaust teaching and many of the issues that arise from the questionnaire findings were taken further during the interview process. In this chapter, I will present the statistical results of the questionnaires, including, where appropriate, the teacher's comments as these will provide some understanding of the rationale behind the answers given. Because of the relatively small number of returns, (27 from History teachers and 22 from RE teachers) I have not made use of advanced techniques of statistical analysis, though I believe I have been able to bring out some significant trends in the teaching of the topic in both subject areas.

History – The Statistical Results

When asked how much time was spent teaching this subject, 41% of respondents selected 1 - 4 hours and 41% selected 5 - 8 hours. This means that only 18% of those surveyed definitely met the QCA guidelines that recommend 8 - 11 hours and 41% were not even close.

The majority, 63%, believed the amount of time they had for teaching this unit was adequate. 30% thought it was less than adequate and only 7% stated it was more than adequate. This 7% represents two respondents; one spent 1 - 4 hours on the subject and commented that: 'The National Curriculum has a huge amount of content at key stage 3 and it is very difficult to effectively teach all the main themes.'[1] The other spent over 17 hours on the Holocaust alone and this response was therefore more understandable as the in-depth study they did covered a whole term.[2] Not all of the respondents provided their comments with regards to this question; of those that did, many stated that time constraints affected teaching this subject.[3] This included some respondents who had stated that the teaching time was adequate, for example one teacher commented that: 'It is an important issue and requires careful consideration but covering 1750-1900 and Twentieth Century in

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[1] History Questionnaire 37.
[2] History Questionnaire 43.
[3] See History Questionnaires 16, 17, 18, 21, 25, 26, 42, 30, 57. The respondent on one questionnaire stated that the time given to this subject was adequate and their subsequent comments suggested that this was not perhaps a positive thing: 'there is a lot to cover in the History National Curriculum. [we] Do spend more time on this than two World Wars, seems an imbalance.' History Questionnaire 1.

year 9 is difficult!'[4] The complexity of the subject and its place within the National Curriculum were also factors.[5]

The Schemes of Work were not used at all by the majority of respondents, only 8% used these regularly or always and 19% said they used them occasionally. The questions I then asked were intended to relate specifically to those teachers using the Schemes of Work,[6] however some respondents went on to answer these, even after stating that they never use them. The results were that none of the respondents thought they were inadequate. Three of the respondents, who never used them, did express their familiarity with them, one stated that they were more than adequate[7] and another believed them to be adequate[8]. The third respondent stated that they were not sure how well the Schemes of Work deal with the Holocaust but did comment more generally that, 'I usually find that QCA materials are too ambitious.'[9] This is in contrast to some of the more positive comments that 'one is able to find material,'[10] they are 'very detailed with learning objectives made explicit,'[11] and 'teachers who teach have worked on the Schemes of Work.'[12] Of those that answered, no one suggested that anything should be removed and those who made suggestions regarding the addition of material, referred to adding more personal accounts, for example, survivor testimony and real 'stories'.[13] One teacher explained further saying that: 'The key to the delivery of this topic is to make the students empathize on a very personal level. We have found literature and personal account the most effective stimulus – once engaged "the story"/narrative can be explored.'[14]

Some teachers, who stated they did not use the Schemes of Work, also answered the question relating to the inclusion of other groups during the teaching of this unit.[15] Of those that responded to this question, the split between regularly

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[4] History Questionnaire 56.
[5] See History Questionnaires 13, 18, 21, 22 and 37.
[6] This was an error on my part, as I had assumed that more teachers would use these. When I conducted the interviews, all the teachers I spoke to did in fact use these. It may be that the questionnaire was not clearly worded.
[7] History Questionnaire 51.
[8] History Questionnaire 16.
[9] History Questionnaire 42.
[10] History Questionnaire 1.
[11] History Questionnaire 51.
[12] History Questionnaire 16.
[13] History Questionnaire 13, 14.
[14] History Questionnaire 13.
[15] This question would have been relevant to all teachers, however, as I assumed the Schemes of Work were widely used, it was asked within this context. Refer to the conclusion for further analysis of this point.

and always including other groups was even and only 1 respondent selected occasionally. Not every respondent specified which groups they included;[16] of those that did all of them included homosexuals and the mentally and physically handicapped, 67% included Gypsies (Sinti and Roma) compared to only 22% who included Jehovah's Witnesses.

The materials used when teaching this subject varied between schools but there were some noticeable similarities. Half of the schools used in full or part the film Schindler's List and its associated teaching material. The second most commonly used resource was the documentary film Peace & War. 15% used extracts from Anne Frank's diaries; 12% used The Holocaust Education Trust information pack and the World at War series; and the remainder was split evenly between information provided by the Spiro Institute and resources from the Internet. 37% of the respondents also stated that they used their own material, compiled by either the school or themselves.

When asked how important it was to introduce students to the Holocaust in this History module, the majority, 78%, believed this to be vital and one respondent felt that this question did not need to be asked, replying: 'well this is really a statement of the obvious'.[17] The remaining respondents chose important and no one selected 'not very important'. Again the reasons for this varied, but certain themes were evident. 51% related the importance to its impact on twentieth-century history and 40% of respondents referred to racism and prejudice.[18] Interestingly, of the 27 questionnaires, only one respondent referred specifically to anti-Semitism, the common thread among the reasons provided on the importance of the subject, were references to the moral implications and its continuing relevance, whether related to current world events, issues of prejudice and racism, or its place within the context of the Second World War.[19] One of the teachers summed up the responses to this question as follows:

> This event is a unique focal point of the twentieth century bringing together many of the flawed human responses to race, technology, government and the influence of history and media. It provides a turning point that is so extreme that students cannot ignore it. Every lesson taught makes it less likely that such an event will be repeated.[20]

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[16] Which of course could mean they included all of them.
[17] History Questionnaire 18.
[18] This is my interpretation of the comments provided. For example, it is referred to as 'pivotal', 'a key moment' and the 'most significant event'.
[19] History Questionnaire 37.
[20] History Questionnaire 25.

The final part of the questionnaire allowed the respondents to give their opinions on whether they considered this subject to present any unique problems. Of those that answered there was concern that children could not understand the subject because of immaturity, as one teacher put it: 'Year 9 [is a] difficult age to teach this topic as so self absorbed [the pupils] find it difficult to relate outside their own experience.'[21] Another teacher said that: 'Many students find it difficult to 'cope' with the material and don't take it as seriously as they should.' The same teacher also expressed concern regarding his or her own ability: 'Lack of teacher knowledge – I always feel that my teaching is inadequate.'[22] This concern was shared by another teacher who stated that: 'the main problem for staff is in terms of the emotions generated – how can one stand back from this and be objective?'[23] The sensitivity of children and the risk of sensationalising the events were also considerations:

> You need to avoid 'sensational' almost voyeuristic teaching of this topic. You can't have kids [sic] think anything other than this is really horrible – rather than it having 'gore' value as some things do when you are teaching much further away in time, e.g. Black Death etc.[24]

These considerations are closely linked to the teaching material used and this is something I explore in greater detail during the interviews.

Religious Education – The Statistical Results

The replies provided by the respondents from the RE department at times closely reflected those provided by the History department. For example 50% of RE respondents spent 0 – 4 hours teaching the subject and 44% spent 5 - 8 hours. [25] One school reported spending 9 - 12 hours teaching this. However, this may have been the combined teaching time as the History department provided the same answer.

The Holocaust is not a mandatory subject within RE therefore it does not have to be included by the Local Education Authority (LEA) in their Agreed Syllabus. Even so, half of the respondents stated that the Holocaust is mentioned specifically

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[21] History Questionnaire 54.
[22] History Questionnaire 17.
[23] Ibid.
[24] History Questionnaire 18.
[25] Within the RE questionnaire the hours spent studying this included 0-4 rather than 1-4 as in the History questionnaire. This is simply because in RE, the subject does not have to be covered and therefore it is conceivable 0 hours could be selected.

within the Agreed Syllabus, in units on prejudice, suffering, justice and injustice and questions of moral authority. Of the respondents who confirmed there was no specific reference to this within the Schemes of Work, only one did not cover the subject at all. Two of the respondents were from Christian schools, which do not use the Agreed Syllabus provided by the LEA and both of these confirmed that they spent time between 0 and 4 hours teaching about the Holocaust.[26]

Only one third of the respondents believed that the Agreed Syllabi were adequate. Of the remainder, 32% believed they were less than adequate and one school selected more than adequate. The remainder either did not answer or were unsure. As with the History respondents, the issue of time constraints was raised frequently.[27] 13% of the respondents stated that because the Agreed Syllabus was a guide, they were able to add material as appropriate, as one teacher said: 'Although the Shoah is only part of this unit, teachers have control over writing the details of each unit. So it is tailored to each school's requirements.'[28] Other reasons given for the Agreed Syllabus being less than adequate were that Judaism and the Holocaust were not included as distinct units. [29]

50% of respondents did want to add to the Agreed Syllabus and there were a variety of reasons for this: several teachers believed the subject should be mandatory; other reasons related to its impact; the need for a more personalised approach, and the need for an approach to the Holocaust from a Jewish perspective.[30] One teacher clarified this point, adding: 'I would like to see the option of Judaism and the Holocaust specifically as it covers so much of history, religion, what it is to be human.'[31]

As the Holocaust is not mandatory, I asked if the subject was introduced at any other time in addition to that specified (or not) on the Agreed Syllabus. The majority, 77% of replies stated that it was. Of these, 29% stated that this was taught at GCSE and 41% included this during other related or relevant RE units and there was an awareness that the History department dealt with this as well. Only one

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[26] RE Questionnaires 54 and 57.
[27] See RE Questionnaires 22, 42, and 58.
[28] RE Questionnaire 27, similar comments were provided on Questionnaire 37 and 23. Although this was stated, no confirmation was provided that this subject would be given preference over another.
[29] See RE Questionnaires 1. 18, 22, 25 and 30.
[30] RE Questionnaire 1, 13, 18, 21, 25, 42 and 58.
[31] RE Questionnaire 30.

school referred to Holocaust Memorial Day,[32] although in reply to the earlier question regarding whether they would like to see anything added to the Agreed Syllabus, a different teacher did suggest 'time for a year 9 Holocaust Day using all the material from Jewish sources.'[33]

Within the RE department 95% of teachers confirmed that they always or regularly included other groups when studying the Holocaust. As with History, the most frequently included group was the mentally and physically handicapped. All but one respondent included these and all but three respondents included Gypsies; and all but two respondents included homosexuals.

The teaching material used by RE departments appears to be much more diverse than that of their History counterparts.[34] The majority confirmed that in addition to their own materials, they use Schindler's List (67% in total) and the second most commonly used resource was The Diary of Anne Frank with 27% of teachers using this in full or part. In contrast to the History department, no respondents confirmed use of material provided by either the Spiro Institute or the Holocaust Education Trust.

With regards to the importance of this subject, 61% believed it to be vital and 33% believed it to be important. One respondent stated that the subject was not important as it is 'covered in History'[35] and another chose not to answer, as this is a 'difficult issue'. This respondent explained this reply further by expressing concern that children are unable to fully understand or cope with the implications of the Holocaust, particularly in light of similar events occurring world wide which are largely ignored.[36]

When asked to provide reasons for believing the Holocaust to be either vital or important, there were a variety of answers, but there were also some common themes and these mirrored many of those on the History questionnaires. Teaching about prejudice,[37] the need for tolerance and issues relating to responsibility were cited most frequently. In total 51% of replies referred to these. Again, as with the

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[32] RE Questionnaire 23.
[33] RE Questionnaire 22.
[34] Some teachers use resources privately obtained, others use worksheets and study aids of their own composition.
[35] RE Questionnaire 34.
[36] RE Questionnaire 51, these teachers' comments are quoted in full below.
[37] See RE Questionnaires 22, 27, 37, 43, 54 and 57.

History respondents, there were references to its importance, 23% referred to its place in history as a significant event, one teacher described it as a: 'key element of Twentieth Century history – showing [the] relevance of religion to our understanding of the world.'[38] There was also a desire to prevent a reoccurrence of the Holocaust by educating the young, 'It's important that we all learn from the past. If humans did this then I'm sure humans would be better people.'[39] Interestingly in an RE context, only two of the respondents made a specific reference to Judaism and the impact of the Holocaust on Jews.[40]

As with the History questionnaire, the final part of this questionnaire allowed teachers to provide their comments on whether teaching the Holocaust presented any unique problems. There was no common thread in the replies to this question. One respondent referred to the difficulties of understanding the Holocaust in terms of the impact this had on the Jewish community, and understanding the role of the perpetrators:

> The whole idea of deconstruction of identity. Being that Jewish identity is determined by their religion, preventing expression of identity allows the oppression to dehumanize the victims and hence justify their actions. To get this idea across rather than the Nazis were different than us therefore evil (which of course is another type of prejudice!) is very difficult. It needs to be done experientially and with empathy.[41]

Another believed that knowledge of the Holocaust was imperative if the place of Jews in the modern world and the Palestinian situation were to be understood.[42] One lengthy and negative reply to this question, highlighted many issues that affect pupil and teacher. This warrants quoting in full:

> Holocaust academically is able to be understood effectively and results are positive. People come away with a positive understanding how they must never let this situation ever happen again. A child is processing lots of changes in their life emotionally and physically. It is very hard for a child whatever their intellectual capacity be, to deal with the emotions the events of the Holocaust create. Some of the most intelligent pupils are very sensitive and are not ready for the images of the Holocaust. I don't believe the full horror of the Holocaust and realisation can be understood until a person becomes an adult. I would rather teach human rights and values which I think are more productive in achieving the necessary aims of the civilised world. How can I teach Holocaust while knowing that similar atrocities are taking place all around the world. I am

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[38] RE Questionnaire 18.
[39] RE Questionnaire 21, see also 18, 22, 42 and 58.
[40] RE Questionnaires 1 and 13.
[41] RE Questionnaire 27.
[42] RE Questionnaire 55.

not providing pupils with hope but with a dismal understanding of how harsh life truly is.[43]

The difficulties associated with the teaching material were also cited as presenting unique problems: 'Some of the documentary evidence produced does need very sensitive handling by the teacher. It is important for students to see the visual images but some students find this very disturbing.'[44] Only one respondent clearly stated that no unique problems existed, saying that: 'it does raise difficult ssues, which at times are hard to discuss, but so do other topics within RS (racism/abortion etc) i.e. bias, differing opinions, values (valuing others), violence/ torture etc used and distressing images/effects.'[45]

Comments and Conclusion

Once returned, it became obvious that there were inherent problems with the questionnaires I had issued. The most obvious of these was that I had assumed the majority of History teachers would use to some extent, the Schemes of Work provided by the QCA and questions three to seven inclusive, related specifically to these. I was greatly surprised to learn that the Schemes of Work, (devised by a steering group made up of representatives from the History education community) were apparently barely used at all. While there were some responses indicating an awareness of this resource even when not used, there were responses from teachers indicating they would, after reading the questionnaire, have a look at them.[46] The implication of course, is that not all teachers were aware of their existence. I think it would be reasonable to suggest that this resource is a valuable one, given that those who were familiar with it would not remove any material and the only recommendations for adding material related to more personalised sources.

There was some uniformity in the resources used by both the History and RE departments, Schindler's List, Peace & War and The Diary of Anne Frank were mentioned with some regularity.[47] These texts and the Schemes of Work are presented from a Jewish perspective; however, there was very little mention of anti-Semitism as an issue associated with the importance of teaching the Holocaust.

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[43] RE Questionnaire 51.
[44] RE Questionnaire 58.
[45] RE Questionnaire 18.
[46] History Questionnaire 55.
[47] Free copies of Schindler's List were distributed to schools when the film was first released.

Although the effect of the Holocaust on Jews was tentatively referred to by several respondents the emphasis was clearly upon issues of prejudice, racism and intolerance as general lessons to be learnt in the present by pupils.

The impact of Holocaust Memorial Day appears from the responses to be minimal. Yet one of the main themes of this day is education and all schools received education packs at the beginning of 2001 as preparation for the first Holocaust Memorial Day. I did not ask any specific questions regarding observance of this, but if it was a high profile event, I believe more respondents would use the materials provided. Only one respondent stated that they observed this and pupils across the school took part in related activities.

Since many teachers devise their own lesson plans and materials the importance they attach to the subject, together with constraints on the time they are able to devote to the unit, will inevitably have an effect upon what is taught and what is learnt. The concern that a subject will not be taught adequately and might be used as a peg on which to hang a particular political opinion was initially raised in relation to the institution of a National Curriculum. This concern is equally relevant to the Holocaust when one considers that content and perspective are controlled to a considerable degree by the teacher and therefore can potentially be highly subjective. For example, one RE respondent stated that he or she did not believe introducing students to the Holocaust was important. The reason for this was that it was covered in History key stage 3. The History respondent from the same school believed it was vital to introduce students and that five to eight hours teaching was sufficient. This respondent clarified further, saying there are 'plenty of other important issues/events to teach about'.[48] Unfortunately, no additional information was given regarding these other 'important issues/events' or whether they may become more important in the future than the Holocaust.

A concern I articulated in the previous chapter, based on the QCA and DFEE guidelines was that the 'universal' implications of the Holocaust, derived from its impact upon non-Jewish communities, would not be adequately addressed. It seems that this was a gross miscalculation: other groups persecuted by the Nazis are included by all the teachers and given this emphasis on the general lessons to be learned, in actuality, the questionnaires suggest that the potential exists for the

[48] History and RE Questionnaires 34.

Jewish aspects of the Holocaust to become lost or extremely diluted, with only three respondents mentioning the Jewish dimension of the subject at all.

The QCA guidelines recommend that History departments spend between eight and eleven hours on this unit. In reality teaching time varies widely and this is mainly due to time constraints placed on departments by the rest of the curriculum requirements. The lack of available time was a point made forcefully by both History and RE respondents.

Bearing in mind issues surrounding the choice of content, the possible interjection of personal or political opinions by teachers and the time restrictions in schools, it has to be asked whether these affect the quality and value of teaching about the Holocaust. For example one History teacher who spent 1 - 4 hours teaching and considered this adequate managed to cover within this time frame the 'roots of anti-Semitism, specific conditions leading to the Holocaust, events of Holocaust, reactions then and now.'[49] Several respondents stated that they found the subject too complex to cover adequately and in such a short amount of time (particularly for those teachers only able to spend 0-4 hours on this), material and issues would inevitably need 'thinning out' and it would be interesting to know therefore, how a decision is made on which materials to use or which issues to cover.

More than half of all the respondents (approximately 65%) across departments referred to the Holocaust as an example of something more general be it of suffering, prejudice, extremities of racism and intolerance. The desire to educate, as a means of prevention was expressed strongly: 'Every lesson taught makes it less likely that such an event will be repeated'[50] and 'it's important that we all learn from the past. If humans did this then I'm sure humans would be better people – which wars may never happen again and that society would be more harmonious.'[51] This is a point I will return to later. But it is worth noting here that other educators and Holocaust scholars believe this to be a problematic notion.

As well as being used as an example of a range of evil behaviours and beliefs it was also compared by many teachers to more recent events in Bosnia and Rwanda. Many historians and theologians believe that the Holocaust can only be

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[49] History Questionnaire 60.
[50] History Questionnaire 25.
[51] RE Questionnaire 21.

effectively 'understood' if it is studied in relation to its impact upon the victims and this was expressed by some of the respondents who wanted more personalised material included in either the Schemes of Work or Agreed Syllabus. The need to encourage empathy among pupils was referred to several times and it seems that by using Schindler's List and The Diary of Anne Frank, this could be achieved. However, this could also be undermined by the more universal lessons that are being taught. The danger is that the more personal and specific aspects raised by the history of what happened could be lost in more general and wider issues.

On occasions, apparently conflicting opinions were expressed within one questionnaire. For example, many respondents felt that time constraints affected their teaching; this included some by teachers who had also stated that the time spent on this subject was adequate. This could mean that given the restrictions, they considered the teaching time adequate that is to say that in the time available they were able to adequately teach the topic, or it could mean that the questions I asked were unclear. By using the multi-site, multi-method approach discussed in the opening chapter, I aimed to address some of these inconsistencies during the interview process.

One issue deserves to be highlighted. In theory, History is taught in accordance with the guidelines set out in the National Curriculum. The QCA provide support and guidance in the form of Schemes of Work. These have a particularly Jewish focus and aim to 'unpack misconceptions', 'show knowledge of how and why' and 'describe some of the ideas and attitudes underpinning the Nazi persecution of the Jews and other groups'. In reality, it seems that the guidelines of the National Curriculum can and indeed are met in a wide variety of ways and the Schemes of Work are not used by the majority of History teachers, some teachers seemed unaware of their content and only a few used this resource frequently. The National Curriculum was designed to provide strict guidelines and implement a 'national standard', however, the freedom of schools with regards to teaching methods and interpretations has resulted in a diversity that must be influenced, to some degree by personal abilities and opinions. Most respondents considered the subject to be vital or important and the way the subject is taught will undoubtedly be affected by this belief but it still leaves room for the introduction of erroneous interpretations. Within RE the diversity is even greater because the Agreed Syllabus is not intended to prescribe teaching content, so its inclusion, content and context are entirely at the discretion of the teacher. It was reassuring nevertheless, that it was included to some extent by most teachers.

The aim of the Schemes of Work is to provide explanations of the Holocaust; the aim of the Agreed Syllabus is to provide a means of promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. In reality many teachers expressed concern about their own lack of understanding, the ability of pupils to understand such a complex subject; the restrictions on time and the subjects place within a wider social understanding of citizenship and moral values. There was a consensus that it has had enormous impact on twentieth century history, but is this only as a general moral lesson, a yardstick by which to measure human behaviour? Is this subject being taught in such a way as to be accurate and useful?

The 'picture' I have painted on the basis of the questionnaire responses is worrying in some respects suggesting a degree of confusion and inconsistency. The strict government guidelines appear to be only loosely adhered to and many factors can potentially affect how the subject is taught. The next stage, therefore, was to arrange the interviews. This enabled me to address some of the points that were raised; it also provided the means of adding to this picture and giving it depth. For example after the questionnaires revealed little mention of anti-Semitism, I felt it was necessary to ask in the interviews how the specifically Jewish aspects of the Holocaust are dealt with and whether any historical context is provided. I also felt it was important to know how a decision is made on the materials and issues that are covered. I specifically wanted to explore the tension between teaching about particular historical events and drawing universal moral lessons from these events, an issue which appeared to be raised by both academic debate and the material gained from the questionnaires.

Chapter Five: Analysis of the Interviews

The questionnaires together with an analysis of the governmental framework in which the subject is taught formed the quantitative element of this research. In accordance with the research model I presented in chapter one, the next stage involved conducting a series of in-depth interviews and providing an analysis of these. For this, I interviewed ten History teachers and five RE teachers. The interviews were qualitative in nature, open-ended and informal. I had a basic set of questions and the same topics were covered in most interviews, but, due to the more informal nature of this part of the research, each interview was different. This type of research is a dynamic process and therefore ideas were generated during the interview process; in addition to this, some topics and questions were covered more by some teachers than others simply because of the time available for the interview and the teacher's own experience, attitude, enthusiasm and knowledge.

From the research carried out for chapter two, from my analysis of the governmental framework in chapter three and from material in the questionnaires, I identified a number of areas that I wanted to address in the interviews. The first of these related to the treatment of the specifically Jewish aspects of the Holocaust. The National Curriculum and QCA guidelines for History indicated that the Holocaust was to be studied as a unit of work with a focus on the treatment of the Jews, but the questionnaires did not demonstrate a clear focus on this. Closely related to this issue was the extent to which the politicised question of the uniquely Jewish definition of the subject as opposed to the wider eugenically motivated view emphasised by recent scholars was influencing the teaching of the subject.

A related but separate concern sprang from the burden of governmental expectations about the way in which the subject could be used to teach a wide range of values such as racial tolerance, pluralism and support for democracy. Were teachers using the subject in this way and if so what effect did this have on the way the subject is presented? The questionnaires suggested that many aspects of the governmental framework of objectives were ignored by or unknown to teachers.

A further issue raised in chapter two concerned the tension between scholarly interpretations of the Holocaust and the impact on collective memory of a wide range of media representations. Were teachers aware of the issues here and how did they affect the teaching and reception of the subject? The widespread use of the film Schindler's List provided a particularly useful approach to these questions.

I also wanted to gain a more general picture of how the subject is taught in secondary schools. The questionnaires showed that many schools used the same resources, but, the time spent on the subject, the teachers own attitudes and approach to the subject, and the value of the resources themselves, implied that how material was chosen and used in the classroom differed greatly between schools. It was also clear from the questionnaires that the Holocaust is taught in several different subjects (English, RE, History, PSHE and Citizenship) and to children of different ages. Similarly the use made of Holocaust Memorial Day varied widely.

Finally, I was interested in the impact the teaching of the subject may have on pupils. Were there respects in which the outcome was not always beneficial? What depth of understanding did children appear to emerge with at the end of the process? I end the chapter with some suggestions about how the subject might be better taught in the future based upon my observations in schools.

The Centrality of the Jewish Experience to the Teaching of the Holocaust

Prior to issuing the questionnaires, I harboured a concern that the Holocaust would be taught only in relation to the Jews, that in effect teachers would not have taken on board the newer perspectives on the eugenic motivation of the regime and the impact this had on a wide range of minority groups. After analysing the questionnaire findings, my position changed and I became concerned that in fact the Jewishness of the Holocaust was being neglected. There was relatively little mention of Jews, Judaism and anti-Semitism as important issues in relation to teaching about the Holocaust, and it appeared that in some cases these may not be mentioned at all.

On the questionnaires, many issues were highlighted as important, including teaching about prejudice, morality, racism, tolerance and responsibility and the desire to prevent a recurrence of the Holocaust. The questionnaire respondents provided a wealth of 'general lessons' that can be drawn from the Holocaust. By this I mean moral lessons that could be illustrated by reference to a range of other historical events. Only two RE respondents referred to Judaism and the impact on Jews and only one History respondent referred to anti-Semitism in particular. This

led me to question whether the statement: 'It is impossible to tell the story of the Holocaust without talking about 'the Jews'' was as obvious as I had assumed.[1]

During the interviews I asked specifically whether anti-Semitism was covered. Less than half of the History teachers introduced anti-Semitism to year 9 groups, (aged fourteen) although one teacher was introducing this in the Schemes of Work for the next year. Among the remaining History teachers, anti-Semitism was discussed with older groups, notably at A' Level, and one teacher did not look at anti-Semitism at all, instead teaching the Holocaust as an aspect of World War Two. Only two History teachers included a specific unit on anti-Semitism, focussing particularly on looking at how the Jews were treated, what it was like to be a Jew during 1933-1945 and discussing anti-Semitism and the fact that it had a long history and was not just a feature of the Nazi era.[2]

In some of the schools, the Holocaust featured within History lessons several times throughout the school years, in year 9, at GCSE and also at A' Level and there were concerns here that the subject could become 'stale' if the same issues were raised each time.[3] A thread was then drawn through the school years, so that those pupils who chose History as a GCSE and/or A' Level subject left with a more rounded knowledge of this period. As one teacher explained:

> We teach it in different ways. In year 9, they do the Second World War and it is taught in the traditional way, in the sense that [it is presented] as a consequence of the war. We do Nazi racial policy; it tends to be a straight, traditional, political explanation without looking at the background in much detail. In year 11, they do coursework as part of their humanities course and in that they look at the Holocaust in a slightly different perspective, this is looking at the birth of Israel. There are core themes and we look at the Holocaust as the moral origin of the idea...As far as anti-Semitism over the last two to three thousand years that comes in year 12 and we look at the death of Christ and ideas about Jewish guilt... and we look at Christian anti-Semitism through the Middle Ages.[4]

This does mean that if the subject was not chosen at GCSE or A' Level in these schools, anti-Semitism would not be covered at all.

One of the most interesting responses to the question of the centrality of Jewish experience came from a History teacher who was well aware of the fears

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[1]Sue Foster and Carrie Mercier, 'The Jewish Background and the Religious Dimension', in Ian Davies (ed), Teaching The Holocaust, (New York: Continuum, 2000), p. 25.
[2] History Interview 9, see also History Interview 8.
[3] History Interview 7, this teacher stated that anti-Semitism was also looked at in RE.
[4] History Interview 4.

and expectations of Jewish advocates of this approach such as Yehuda Bauer and of the politicisation involved in presenting the subject in this way:

> I suppose they get a hit and miss approach, in terms of political and racial and asocials. You try and make it clear that racially the Gypsies were eliminated for racial reasons and alongside the Jews at the same time. There were a variety of other groups in that situation. We try usually not to get too mixed up with the difference, as there is a clear difference with their intention with respect to the Jews and the gypsies compared to the asocials and homosexuals, the Jehovah's Witnesses. It's not helpful to lump them all together, there is a real difference in intention. The goal was different. There is a potential there, an agenda, to underplay what happened to the Jews, you could try and make out that the Jews just had a raw deal here along with everyone else. The only reason they are treated as special is to justify the existence of Israel. So one wouldn't bring it in too much, because I wouldn't want it to detract. Part of the Holocaust denial thing is denying full stop that it was anything special, so yes it happened but it wasn't directed against the Jews, they just happened to be Jewish. Which is not actually the case.[5]

Yet what was interesting about this response was that the piece of course work currently done to provide background on anti-Semitism in Europe in the nineteenth century was not to be taught in the future because of its alleged difficulty.[6] One other reply, as well as indicating that the subject was not addressed specifically, suggested that without such a focus the result may be unhelpfully incoherent:

> We mention it, but I don't actually do it as such. I do talk about it in year 10, we certainly look at the fact that anti-Semitism is not new and I do talk about and will be teaching it as part of our unit on the church, that the Jews were persecuted in Europe and I do talk about it as a matter of interest that the Jews are still forbidden from Leicester. They were expelled and I talk about the Jews being expelled from England in the Middle Ages and its part of that edict and in Leicester it's never been rebuked [sic]. I do talk about the massacres of Jews in Europe and about them being expelled from here and I also tend not to do France because that's a little bit too obscure, but I do mention the problems in Russia and that's before the Nazi era.....We don't do huge amounts of teaching on it, but they do understand that Hitler's hatred of the Jews wasn't new, plus, when I do Hitler, we look at where anti-Semitism came from, the fact that there was so much anti-Semitism in Vienna and we talk about in general why the Jews are so hated, in particular the financial thing. Sometimes we mention 'The Merchant of Venice' – depends on whether they've heard of it or not.[7]

One other respondent was well aware of the issue, but also saw difficulties in tackling it:

> I think one of the problems as well is that anti-Semitism runs through history, the Middle Ages, the massacres and things like that. I mean the Merchant of Venice is anti-Semitic, but the children only really confront it in History lessons as though it was a new thing in the twentieth century and so I think it becomes

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[5] History Interview 8.
[6] Ibid.
[7] History Interview 6.

personified as it was Hitler, it was only him; he was a mad man; he was evil. Now that might be the level of understanding they get from it, rather than the history which dates back a thousand years.[8]

One possible solution to this problem seems a little surprising:

I think there's one book we use that draws a parallel with the treatment of the Welsh in medieval times; what the Welsh weren't allowed to have and weren't allowed to do. So that you can see it's not just racial persecution, that it goes on through history.[9]

Among all the History teachers I interviewed, anti-Semitism did not seem to occupy a position of central importance. I believe this lack of emphasis could be related to the teachers' perception of the prevailing attitudes of the students. Only one teacher had experience of anti-Semitic views being expressed by students and this was described as 'subtle among the Muslim students'.[10] The other teachers (excepting the one who did not discuss anti-Semitism at all) stated that anti-Semitism was non-existent amongst their students and this was largely down to their lack of awareness of Judaism and the Jewish people:[11]

> If you asked the kids to identify what a Jew was, they might struggle. When they actually look at the caricatures of a Jew from Nazi Germany – which you might think obvious, I'm not sure they do... They find it quite difficult to come to a perception of what the Jews are... In terms of all their prejudices, I wouldn't say that anti-Semitism is one of them.[12]

Racism in general, rather than anti-Semitism in particular was considered an issue at several of the schools: 'you will get within the schools tensions, with the Asian groups sometimes... you might find anti-Asian feeling in the school because there are Asian people there, but they don't know any Jewish people to have a negative opinion of.'[13] It seemed from the reaction I received, that anti-Semitism is largely considered a thing of the past:

> I think they are pretty scrubbed clean of the history on that... You might hear once in a blue moon something. Yet when I was at school you would hear it all the time... Most people wouldn't know a Jew and a lot of kids wouldn't know Jews, have any consciousness of them. To some extent it's a disconnected thing.[14]

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[8] History Interview 2.
[9] Ibid.
[10] History Interview 4.
[11] See also History Interview 1.
[12] History Interview 6.
[13] History Interview 1.
[14] History Interview 8.

In addition to this, some of the History teachers referred to difficulties incorporating anti-Semitism into their teaching whilst presenting a cogent historical thread for the students to follow, because the Holocaust unit was taught in the context of the Second World War rather than in the context of Judaism. There was, however, awareness that the role of Jews in European culture and society was discussed in other units. Two teachers referred to an earlier key stage three unit on the Black Death and one also thought the Jews and anti-Semitism were mentioned in a unit on the Romans.[15] Other reasons cited by History teachers for avoiding this aspect of the Holocaust, or only having limited study of it, were the complexity of the subject, a lack of material aimed at children, and teaching restraints such as the time available and the already packed content of the Schemes of Work.

The result is that in those schools that leave the introduction of anti-Semitism until the optional GCSE or A' Level, there is a very real possibility of students ending their school career with a limited understanding of anti-Semitism and the Jewish people. Yet amongst many academics, the consensus is that it is vitally important to study anti-Semitism in order to understand the Holocaust.[16] In reality, this is a view that does not seem to be shared or practised widely by the History teachers I interviewed, although other commentators have reached different conclusions, notably Ronnie S. Landau who during his own research found that:

> The teachers interviewed were virtually unanimous that Jewish history in general and the Holocaust in particular must be taught in order to combat racial prejudice and the abuse of power. To fulfil this goal it was felt that, ideally, the Holocaust should not be torn from its historical and wider educational contexts – as so regularly happens – even if time is limited.[17]

Findings nearer to my own were evident in a survey conducted by Geoffrey Short. During the interviews he conducted, 'only one teacher reported an anti-Semitic incident that was directly related to teaching about the Holocaust... Most teachers said that anti-Semitism had not cropped up in any form.'[18]

The RE results were very different. Of the RE teachers I interviewed, all of them looked at the Holocaust from a Jewish perspective, even though in some schools they did not look at the Holocaust within a unit specifically on Judaism (this was because in these schools, Judaism as a religion was not taught at all and the

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[15] History Interviews 5 and 7.
[16] Sarah Rees Jones, 'The Roots of Antisemitism', Teaching the Holocaust; Educational Dimensions, Principles and Practice, Ian Davies (ed.) (London: Continuum, 2000) pp. 11-23.
[17] Ronnie S. Landau, Studying the Holocaust, p 11.
[18] Geoffrey Short, 'The Holocaust in the National Curriculum: A Survey of Teachers' Attitudes and Practices', in The Journal of Holocaust Education, vol. 4, No. 2, p. 180.

Holocaust was taught within a unit on prejudice). All the RE teachers spent some time examining Judaism, the Jewish people, and anti-Semitism. But, due to different perceptions of the Agreed Syllabus, half the teachers I interviewed looked at the Holocaust in year 8 or 9 and the other half looked at it in year 10 or 11, at GCSE level. I specifically refer to perceived differences because, for example, one teacher who used the Swindon syllabus stated that it was not covered until GCSE because it did not come up in the Agreed Syllabus:

> Now that the new syllabus has come in... Judaism is done at the junior schools and primary schools... we're looking at Apartheid with year 9 and we go on to Martin Luther King, but you don't get the chance of looking at Judaism and looking at the Holocaust, we tend to do that in year 11.[19]

Another teacher, using the same Agreed Syllabus, did teach the Holocaust in year 9 within a unit on prejudice, here the focus on Judaism remained a key element and the history of anti-Semitism was taught, 'albeit, briefly'.[20]

Obviously where Judaism is taught in the RE syllabus some mention of the Holocaust might be expected and the evidence of the teachers suggested that it was given a central place. As one teacher put it:

> It comes into the GCSE because it's year 10 or 11 and because they study Judaism, - they do two religions at GCSE and one's Judaism and you can't study Judaism without doing the Shoah. So we look at it in quite a lot of detail and we touch on it and come back to it on lots of occasions throughout, because it's really looking, underneath it all they're finding out why it's been so critical this century because in effect for Jews it's the culmination of several major occasions in their history where they've suffered abuse, intolerance and all the rest of it. So it's looking at it from a historical perspective, looking at it emotionally – how it's affected Jews. It's looking at the fact that Judaism nearly died out as a result of it . It's looking at the reasons why then celebrating Shabbat, the family and all the festivals that go with the family are so important, because it's part of remembering the faith, celebrating the faith. So it's looking at it in a very, very wide perspective really.[21]

Even where Judaism is less central to the RE syllabus, RE teachers still find space to focus on the Holocaust and on anti-Semitism:

> What we do here, we major on three religions, we do Christianity, Islam and Buddhism so it's not taught with Judaism. We don't actually touch that religion at all because of the nature of our children – they need to be streamlined in terms of knowing three religions well rather than millions [sic] not very well. So it comes up in the year 8 unit 'Prejudice and Discrimination', and it also comes up in year 10 and 11, not so much there. We tend to do it in the 'Social Harmony' unit of the Edexcel exam. So within year 8 we actually run a creative writing unit

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[19] RE Interview 1.
[20] RE Interview 3.
[21] RE Interview 4.

> on the Holocaust, imagining you were a person, a Jew, in a concentration camp, what were you experiencing?[22]

Like History teachers, RE teachers found that anti-Semitism on the whole did not exist among their students, 'racism yes, but not anti-Semitism.'[23] Only one RE teacher was aware of students referring to pre-existing negative stereotypes: 'they will tell you that it [the Holocaust] was Hitler, all the Germans and Jews who had big noses.'[24] When I asked this teacher if there was any existing anti-Semitism, she stated that, 'they're not prejudiced towards them.'[25] Like their History colleagues, the RE teachers concluded that this was because most children did not know any Jews and students had had so little contact with the Jewish faith that negative opinions had not been given the opportunity to form:

> I think that nowadays, Judaism is such a minority religion... so you don't notice the Jews very much and of course they merge in with everybody, it's not like the Sikh, or Hindu, or Muslim, you haven't got the real skin and facial differences, so you don't get anti-Semitism at all.[26]

From the interviews conducted with History teachers, it seemed that students could be getting a somewhat 'patchy' account of Jews, Judaism and anti-Semitism, if they were getting any information on these at all. After interviewing the RE teachers, it seemed apparent these aspects of the Holocaust were being covered and in considerable depth at either year 8 and 9 or GCSE. However, while this may counter some of the inconsistencies and gaps in the History unit, GCSE RE, like GCSE History, is not compulsory in all schools and there would still be instances where this is not covered in RE or History until GCSE, meaning that again some students would not confront the subject.

Even in schools where RE covered anti-Semitism and History did not, there still needs to be good cross-curricula ties between the subjects to avoid confusion. It is entirely conceivable that students could go from a History lesson to an RE lesson, both dealing with the Holocaust, without any concrete links being established between the two. An awareness of this danger was expressed by one RE teacher, who looked at the Holocaust in year 9 specifically because it coincided with the History department's study: 'because we do it alongside history, we don't need a lot

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[22] RE Interview 5.
[23] RE Interview 3, see also RE interviews 1 and 4.
[24] RE Interview 5.
[25] Ibid.
[26] RE Interview 1; see all the other RE interviews, as all the teachers interviewed express this opinion to some degree.

of background... we obviously have to put it in it's context so the kids don't think they're going from one lessons to another and it's totally separate.'[27]

Although I feel that it is possible to conclude that anti-Semitism does not exist in any significant measure among the children within the schools I visited, the appropriateness of offering little or no coverage of anti-Semitism must be questioned. This is an important issue since given the smallness of the Jewish community in Britain today, the experience of the children in the schools I visited could be typical of the country at large. If it is reasonable to suggest that most children would not be able to identify a Jew at the start of the unit, this can only make more imperative an accurate and balanced presentation of prejudice directed against them. Arguing that problems of prejudice against any minority do not exist simply because students have not yet encountered any members of this group, is not a good reason for ignoring a potential problem. If the absence of anti-Semitism among children is explained by their lack of familiarity with Jews and Judaism, it logically follows that in order to ensure that anti-Semitism is not being fostered, the knowledge imparted should be carefully considered.

In addition to this, there was evidence, as I suggested above, that negative stereotypes did exist in a minority of classrooms and as Geoffrey Short suggests, this can have an undesirable impact on teaching about the Holocaust, particularly from within a Christian context. Short's conclusion from his own research in this area is fairly pessimistic; however, he raises some pertinent issues relevant to my own findings:

> Children within KS3 are likely to harbour a variety of misconceptions of a religious nature about Jews... These misconceptions range from a belief that Jews are guilty of deicide to a perception of Judaism as a polytheistic faith. In addition, many children did not know that Jesus was a Jew. When teaching the Holocaust to Christian (or nominally Christian) children, such ignorance is hardly conducive to portraying Nazism as an unmitigated evil... there is no reason to believe that religious education will automatically undermine misconceptions of other faiths. Indeed, as far as Judaism is concerned, RE may well add to the confusion and, in the process, present the religion in an unsympathetic light. But even where this does not happen, the fact that children learn about Jews in the context of RE could have a deleterious effect in the sense of reinforcing a perception of Jews as primarily a religious community. The implication for Holocaust education is that children come to see the Jewish victims of Nazism as necessarily committed to Judaism. No teacher seemed aware of this danger.[28]

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[27] RE Interview 3.
[28] Geoffrey Short, 'The Holocaust in the National Curriculum', p. 183.

Elsewhere, Short has argued that: 'It is not possible to grasp the reality of the Holocaust unless one possesses a reasonably mature concept of a Jew. At the very least this concept must embrace the Godless as well as the God-fearing.'[29] Whilst the five in-depth interviews I carried out amongst RE teachers did not on the whole provide evidence to support Short's fears about the teaching of Judaism and the Holocaust, the picture was less clear-cut in the case of the larger sample of RE teachers represented by the questionnaires. As we have seen only two mentioned the need to teach about anti-Semitism and one mentioned the need to focus on Jewishness as a religious identity without appearing to be aware of the points raised by Short.

The Holocaust and its Universal Implications

As we have seen, the government ascribes tremendous importance to the general lessons that can be drawn from teaching the Holocaust, as opposed to studying what made it historically specific if not unique. In analysing the results from the questionnaires it seemed that there was a danger that students were being presented with a confused and ill-thought out array of implications to be drawn from the Holocaust. After conducting the interviews, I would argue that this is not straightforwardly the case and that the confusion arose partly because of a limitation with the questionnaires - I was using these to try and take a snapshot of a dynamic process in action. Teaching materials and methods are constantly evolving and developing and this is a necessary process if students are to identify and to understand complex topics. It is largely to meet the demands of generational change that other examples and issues are being raised in relation to the Holocaust. If the teachers' aim is to produce in students a knowledge enabling them to explain events and their significance, this kind of approach is necessary. Empathy and understanding require an interpretation of events in terms relevant to students today and this means that to some extent, the Holocaust has to be used in a comparative way. Teachers are well aware of the challenges this raises for them. As one teacher put it: 'The kids always tend to think History is not relevant... why do we do History it's about the past.'[30] For each class, in each year, the interpretative framework will need to change to retain this sense of relevance. As one teacher stated:

> They look at these things and they think 'this is out of order', they recognise this is wrong, but I don't think they would be able to put themselves in a position where that would happen and they don't recognise it in anything that's around

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[29] Geoffrey Short, Teaching the Holocaust: Some Reflections on a Problematic Area,' In The British Journal of Religious Education, Vol. 14, 1991, pp. 28-34, 30.
[30] History Interview 7.

> them at the moment. We try and link it into types of prejudice that they see around them, but they don't see any institutionalised racism on that scale so it's very difficult for a lot of them, it's almost fiction.[31]

As the Holocaust slips further back into history and students no longer have parents or grand-parents who were in some way involved, it seems inevitable that to make it relevant and understandable, the way it is taught will change: 'You have to rethink its relevance all the time... you have to say 'are these issues still important?'[32] The comparative examples used will also be subject to change for the same reason. As one respondent said: 'I usually relate it to what went on in the former Yugoslavia. The trouble is most of them are too young to remember that. I sometimes relate it to the situation in Northern Ireland, compare that to a form of ethnic cleansing.'[33]

By referring to other world events, teachers it seems are not making the kinds of detailed comparison with other events in the same manner as some academics have done.[34] The recent events the teachers refer to are used in order to highlight the relevance and importance of continued study of the Holocaust for their students:

> Rwanda and what happened in Yugoslavia is relevant, but is that history? What that is, is using current affairs to illustrate that these issues are still alive. You don't teach those as history, they are the stimulus the way of getting kids engaged and to realise they are important.[35]

In addition to the comparative examples teachers used, new concepts and ideas also impact on the content of lessons. For example Daniel Goldhagen's book, Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust was mentioned by several teachers and as more works are published these may also be incorporated in some way.[36] As one said:

> I have been teaching for fifteen years and if I think about the way teaching the Holocaust has changed, certainly, I emphasise more the fact that the Gypsy children were victims and we talk a lot more about the euthanasia programme which began in 1939... we put that in the context of the Goldhagen theory that the German people were in some way responsible.[37]

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[31] History Interview 3.
[32] History Interview 4.
[33] History Interview 2.
[34] See for example: Yehuda Bauer, Rethinking the Holocaust, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) and Alan S. Rosenbaum, (ed.) Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide, (Boulder: Westview Press,1998).
[35] History Interview 4.
[36] See also History Interview 3.
[37] History Interview 4.

In helping students to understand difficult concepts with which they are unfamiliar, for example anti-Semitism, reference to general concepts such as prejudice can be particularly helpful: 'We talk about their own prejudices... some of the kids are quite open about prejudice, like with immigrants and illegal immigrants.'[38] As well as making the unfamiliar more understandable, a student's personal experience can be a valuable starting point when trying to create empathy:

> The thing is, if you talk about racial prejudice and you say to them, 'have you ever been a victim of racial prejudice?' They've always got a story... They always think they're unfairly treated. What you can do is relate their own experience to other circumstances, other situations. Building a kind of empathy.[39]

Some of the examples used were specifically intended to draw on an individual student's experience. For example, several teachers referred to bullying as an issue they discussed whilst studying the Holocaust: 'Often when I teach something like this, I will relate it to school issues like bullying. Bullying is a constant factor in school.'[40] This comparison is also used to try and make students focus on the question of responsibility and how they might have been drawn into the processes of the Holocaust. As one RE teacher explained:

> They very much perceive they would behave differently so you have to get down to well if there was a fight at school – would you stay and watch and they say yes, so you're trying to get them to see that they very much conform to what was going on, which is tricky. They find the whole thing really difficult and they imagine it could never ever happen again and you say look at Kosovo and you go through different places where it's happened and they just cannot believe that people are that horrid.[41]

From my experience of talking to teachers, the government's agenda for the teaching of the Holocaust was far less influential in their adoption of this wider approach than what they perceived to be the pedagogic pressures to make the subject relevant to the understanding of their pupils. But it was not altogether absent. One teacher explained the reasons behind adopting a broader approach:

> I taught in London for quite a long time and when I started teaching there were big issues about multiculturalism and those key issues and so I'm kind of ingrained with that. It's my first principle, when I plan a lesson, I think about what kind of other lessons are you learning about how you treat other people, how do you stop prejudice and I always start, after I've shown those films, I always ask: 'What is prejudice?' Why are people prejudiced?' So we're looking at the psychological roots before looking at actually what happened.[42]

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[38] History Interview 3.
[39] History Interview 4.
[40] History Interview 1.
[41] RE Interview 3.
[42] History Interview 4.

Another History teacher adopted the same approach:

> In the sort of History we teach... its dramatic nature, it's focus on the issues of human rights and racism, individual participation within democracies, dictatorships, political participation and those sorts of issues...[the Holocaust] will stand as a relevant case study for ever and a day.[43]

But whatever the motivation for adopting a broad comparative approach to the Holocaust, it is not unproblematic. Is it the case as Nicholas Kinloch suggests, that 'apart from the most general lessons... the Shoah probably has no more to teach British students than any other genocide of modern – or for that matter, medieval times?'[44] Although such comparisons may seem relevant to the pupils are they necessarily appropriate? Do they run the risk of clouding rather than clarifying the issues? It is interesting to note, for example, that whereas one teacher mentioned above thought it appropriate to make comparisons with Northern Ireland, another did not:

> No, I do remember talking about it in relation to something and saying 'it's a bit like that'. When they do Northern Ireland in Key Stage 4, year 10, we talk about the setting in Northern Ireland and the massacres, and the fact that that is compared to genocide. We compare that to year 9 and talk about the meaning of the word genocide and is that the right word to be using when looking at Northern Ireland.[45]

The comments of another History teacher seem less circumspect:

> I quite like to tell the story, to let the events unfold - 'that is the story of the Holocaust, that is what happened'. Maybe it is less rigorous with the Holocaust than with other subjects because it's enough and speaks for itself. What I would like to do next year is bring in responsibility and maybe more citizenship issues – what would you do? Was it right and what could they have done? Also bring in the idea about things like VW and why do no Jews ever buy cars from VW, because they used slave labour. So compare this to say Nike trainers and 'why are you wearing these?' Or 'why do you eat Cadbury's chocolate?' when companies use slave labour and try and widen it out a bit.[46]

Apart from taking issue with the comment that the events speak for themselves, the comparison of forms of 'slave labour' is confusing. Whatever the rights and wrongs of western companies' use and exploitation of third world labour – and they are considerable - the slave labour of Auschwitz was different in that death was the inevitable outcome for all those abused in this way.

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[43] History Interview 8.
[44] Nicholas Kinloch, 'Parallel Catastrophes?' p. 13.
[45] History Interview 5.
[46] History Interview 7.

Here one is reminded of debates about how difficult it often is to draw lessons from such comparisons. In this context, the case of the moral philosopher Peter Singer has been much discussed. As an advocate of voluntary euthanasia under strictly controlled conditions he described the reaction in Germany to his views in one particularly condemnatory article:

> The article was illustrated with photographs of the transportation of 'euthanasia victims' in the Third Reich, and of Hitler's 'Euthanasia Order'. The article gave readers no idea at all of the ethical basis on which I advocated euthanasia, and it quoted spokespeople for groups of the disabled who appeared to believe that I questioned their right to life. I sent a brief reply in which I pointed out that I was advocating euthanasia not for anyone like themselves, but for severely disabled newborn infants, and that it was crucial to my defense of euthanasia that these infants would never have been capable of grasping that they are living beings with a past and a future. Hence my views cannot be a threat to anyone who is capable of wanting to go on living, or even of understanding that his or her life might be threatened. After a long delay, I received a letter from *Der Spiegel* telling me that, for reasons of space, they had been unable to publish my reply. Shortly afterward, however, *Der Spiegel* found space for a further highly critical account of my position... and again, the same photograph of Nazi transport vehicles.[47]

Commenting on the issues in his book Ethics and Extermination Reflections on Nazi Genocide,[48] Michael Burleigh observes:

> The case of Peter Singer illustrates in extreme form, not only the parochial intolerance of some sections of the modern academy towards heterodox views... but how debates about bioethical issues are still charged and clouded by memories of Nazi Germany. Anyone who has discussed these issues will know that feeling of weariness when, inevitably, someone accuses their opponent of holding Nazi-like opinions... a charge which elicits an easy emotional response... In some circles, one simply needs to invoke Nazi Germany in order to touch base in terms of the unassailable authenticity of one's arguments.[49]

Such comparisons may also run the risk of trivialising the enormity of what happened in the Holocaust. Comparisons to school-yard bullying may be one such example. On the other hand, one example used by several schools was more historically appropriate as well as relevant to the experience of the children: 'There is quite a large traveller community in this area and they come and go in and out of this school and there is a bit of an anti-traveller, therefore, Gypsy sort of feeling.'[50]

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[47] Peter Singer, Practical Ethics, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd Edition, 1993), p. 345.
[48] Michael Burleigh, Ethics and Extermination Reflections on Nazi Genocide, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.142-152, 145.
[49] Ibid.
[50] History Interview 5.

Even when used with the best of intentions teachers sometimes face difficulties in making comparisons with contemporary minority groups. For example, several teachers[51] were reluctant to refer to the treatment of homosexuals because of the jocular response they would get:

> I always mention the different order of stars, who they were and unfortunately the word 'gay' seems to have been completely misused in schools, it's used as a term of abuse... so when I say they persecuted anyone who happened to be gay – there they go, they're off again.[52]

Others were aware of particularly homophobic attitudes existing in their schools but thought it too complicated an issue to refer to briefly.[53] One can agree that the need to tackle homophobic attitudes amongst school pupils is an important one, but also agree with the view that even though homosexuals were persecuted and died in the Holocaust, this is not necessarily the best place to deal with it in the curriculum.

The introduction of other later events into the story can be confusing, especially if it is accurate to say that 'the pupil's knowledge of current affairs is very limited.'[54] The facts of the Holocaust could potentially become confused by too many general comparisons and this was something that teachers were aware of. When I asked one teacher whether they included other groups persecuted by the Nazis, she replied: 'If the pupils are aware of it then I would bring it up. It has to be within the pupils understanding, again with lower ability pupils, if you start to try and bring in three or four other groups, it may confuse them.'[55] The limited time that many teachers had for teaching the subject further reinforced this view.

Finally, by discussing the way the Holocaust is taught, together with more general 'lessons' it has to be asked whether the aims of History teaching have become too broad. Should more general, universal 'lessons' even be considered as an appropriate aim of History teaching? Is it not the case that History should be taught for its own sake, rather than being utilised as a platform for moral and ethical issues, an idea the government appears to support? Or can the two objectives be combined as Kate Hammond appears to suggest arguing that the Holocaust has the

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[51] See also History Interview 5.
[52] History Interview 1.
[53] History Interview 7.
[54] History Interview 1.
[55] Ibid.

twin and related aims of producing in students: 'a proper understanding of the historical significance of the event *and* a quiet appreciation of its true horror.'[56]

Holocaust Teaching and Collective Memory

As we have seen in chapter two, much current scholarly discussion of the Holocaust centres on the perceived gap between the work of historians and popular reception of the past often identified by the term 'collective memory'. As is frequently pointed out, the latter often owes more to media representations of the past than to what archival evidence reveals. In teaching at secondary school level, it rapidly became clear to me that such media representations play a key part in Holocaust education and I was anxious in my interviews to assess the benefits and potential pitfalls that this entailed.

Before looking more closely at some of the actual materials used and the associated issues, it is necessary to take into consideration more general factors that will impact on the *value* of these resources. For example if two schools use the same piece of film, but one has a teaching time of three hours and the other has a teaching time of eighteen hours, how the material is used will inevitably differ.

As originally confirmed in the questionnaire results, the teachers I interviewed stated that the issue of how much time is allocated to teaching a specific topic was affected by several considerations, in particular how much time and subject matter remain to be taught in that particular term: 'The QCA Schemes have about 22 topics, the Holocaust is at the end of these and time can run out, you may plan for a certain amount of time, but other things come up and you can't do it... Basically we have half a term for each topic.'[57] Also, whether the ability of the class and enthusiasm of the teacher are sufficient: 'I find it an enormously difficult subject to teach to year 9 for various reasons. It could well be that I don't spend three hours teaching it. It depends on the way the kids react.'[58] This flexibility could have a detrimental effect, as one History teacher stated: 'We don't always teach it at KS3, partly because of time. We sometimes run out of time.'[59] However, this flexibility can work in favour of additional teaching time on the Holocaust:

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[56] Kate Hammond, 'From horror to history: teaching pupils to reflect on significance', Teaching History, Issue 104, September 2001, p.15.
[57] History Interview 1.
[58] History Interview 2.
[59] History Interview 8.

> We went to the Imperial War Museum on a history trip and one of the things the kids really wanted to see was the Holocaust exhibit and that was a year 9 group and once they'd been, when we came back they said 'look Miss, I know we're meant to be doing Buddhism, but can we do something on these Jews and the Holocaust because we've not done about the Jews and the Holocaust'. So we actually ditched the other stuff... and did a general link in.[60]

Overall, the attitude towards teaching time seemed pessimistic; several of the History teachers mentioned that generally lesson time was being reduced and that this was due to either, the changing status of the school (one school was being changed into a specialised sports academy) or as a consequence of the re-structuring of the whole time-table.[61] This undoubtedly would have an impact on particular units and it is extremely unlikely that this would be positive.

In addition to the pressures and restrictions because of the time physically available, it is also widely accepted that for effective learning, a variety of resources and teaching methods are required:

> History can be communicated in many ways – pictures, posters, maps, diagrams, charts, stories, narrative, notes, essays, oral accounts, role-play, drama, IT, tape, video... Any of the skills identified above, which are central to being a successful young historian, can be developed individually, in pairs, groups or in classes.[62]

So that the most can be made from teaching this particular unit, some consideration must be given to the importance of deciding which teaching resources and methods to use. Whatever resources are used, educationalists agree that they need to do more than relay a chronology in order to be meaningful. As Chris Husbands explains:

> Knowing about the past is never just about knowing 'when things happened'. If pupils cannot begin to explain why they happened, with what consequences and effects, if they cannot explain why some historical periods and events have a significance *for them* if, in short, they cannot develop an interpretative framework for their understandings of the past, then knowing about the past is reduced to a sort of quiz game.[63]

The teachers I interviewed referred to a huge variety of resources, for example: cartoons from the period, videos, films, books, poetry, pictures and stories. Many of them referred specifically to the benefits of visually based resources:

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[60] RE Interview 3.
[61] See History Interview 6.
[62] Ruth Watts and Ian Grosvenor (eds.), Crossing the Key Stages of History Effective History Teaching 5-16 and Beyond, (London: David Fulton, 1995), p. 5.
[63] Chris Husbands, What is History Teaching? Language, Ideas and Meaning in Learning about the Past (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996). p. 133.

> I sometimes use clips from Anne Frank, there are a few history videos that are quite powerful, that have powerful images. I use photographs of Yad Vashem, photographs of the statue with all the skeletons and bones, this is quite an evocative image and I use a lot of photographs. I use poems, Holocaust survivor poems and I try and get a package from all sorts of angles.[64]

The evocative images and their emotional impact were considered important because it formed an essential part of the learning experience. As one teacher said: 'You have to try and have some sort of emotional response, you also have to have some sort of comprehension of what occurred.'[65] As well as prompting an emotional response, visual material, in particular, was credited with providing a 'realistic' edge: 'We try to make it more immediate by showing images... One of the first lessons I do... I show a series of pictures, one is a pile of shoes, one is someone having their head shaved... We use videos as well.'[66] There was also some consensus regarding the effect of visual material in encouraging an empathetic response through personal identification with the images. The use of visual material was felt to have advantages for the less able students and for those students who struggle with written source material which is in line with current educational thinking: 'One way of ensuring that reading difficulties do not always get in the way of historical thinking is for teachers to emphasize the visual dimension.'[67]

Some teachers also believed that studying the Holocaust provided a unique opportunity for students to use a wider than normal collection of resources and for teachers to use a variety of methods not always possible or appropriate when looking at other topics:

> My normal work with them is very much concentrating on written work, extended writing, in this unit it's a lot more discussion. We do do written work, but particularly when we get to things like the death camps, I just find it a spurious exercise getting them to describe daily routine or anything like that. So a lot of it is discussion and sharing ideas.[68]

When the questionnaires were analysed, several resources were mentioned frequently: The Diary of Anne Frank, Schindler's List, Peace and War and The World at War series. All but two of the teachers I interviewed used Schindler's List in some way. Some of the teachers only used extracts due to the 15 certificate rating

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[64] RE Interview 4.
[65] History Interview 8.
[66] History Interview 3.
[67] Alan Farmer and Peter Knight, Active History in Key Stages 3 and 4, (London: David Fulton, 1995), p. 41, and also Pamela Mays, Why Teach History? (London, University of London Press, 1974) p. 85.
[68] History Interview 3.

of the film; others contacted parents and after obtaining permission showed the whole film, although due to its length this was done outside normal lessons. [69] The majority of the teachers I interviewed also used extracts from The Diary of Anne Frank and nearly half of the History teachers used The World at War episode on Genocide. None of them used the Peace and War series.

The use of video material in the classroom has become widespread, and all the teachers I interviewed made some reference to video material and the incorporation of this medium into classrooms generally is popular. According to one educationalist the majority of History teachers in the UK use video and television as a regular part of their classroom practice.[70] The advantages of this strategy, particularly to a generation of children over-familiar with the cinema and the television, are that it can make the past more accessible and bring to life remote places and people. As Robert Rosenstone says: 'a century after the invention of motion pictures, the visual media have become arguably the chief carrier of historical messages in our culture.'[71] It can also have a long-lasting impact, allowing pupils to make an emotive connection with their subject, as well as acting as verification for written materials. [72] As one teacher explained:

> We do spend quite a long time on Schindler's List... I think for our kids this is one of the most powerful things because their lives revolve around the moving image, television and films... almost that validates, even though it is a made up Hollywood version, that validates what they have learnt.[73]

Another typical comment was: 'Its amazing the reaction you get from the kids because I don't think they realise the extent of what happened and by watching Schindler's List, even the students who perhaps, don't settle down so well, they're just absorbed.'[74]

Due to the widespread use of Schindler's List and also to its controversial nature in the eyes of many academic commentators, I believe that the use of this film merits further examination. The film is considered controversial for a number of reasons. According to the Holocaust historian Tim Cole:

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[69] Ibid
[70] Farmer and Knight, Active History, pp.41-42.
[71] Robert A. Rosenstone, (ed.), Revisioning History: Film and the construction of a new past, (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 3.
[72] Arthur James and Robert Phillips, Issues In History Teaching, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 99. Also see History Interview 8.
[73] History Interview 3.
[74] RE Interview 2.

> *Schindler's List* reflects the contemporary fascination with the 'Holocaust'... It also contributes to it. The myth of the 'Holocaust' has emerged over the course of the last thirty years as a defining moment in modern history. Spielberg's movie both points to that mythical status, and has been critical in reshaping the myth of the 'Holocaust'.[75]

Cole believes that it is a film that has been received by the public as though it were *the* definitive work on the Holocaust. As he puts it, 'the virtual reality of Spielberg's 'Holocaust' is more real than the 'Holocaust' of history.'[76] This is a view shared by Yosefa Loshitsky who claims that Spielberg creates a 'fantasy of witnessing' and the film itself is an attempt to provide a 'master narrative.'[77] Omer Bartov is equally critical:

> *Schindler's List* and all that it depicts will remain the only version of the Holocaust to which much of the public will become exposed, and one, moreover, whose authority as a true reconstruction of the past is reinforced by the fact that it is based on an "authentic" story. This extraordinary tale is therefore transformed into a representative segment of the story as a whole, obliterating thereby the fact that in the real Holocaust most of the Jews died.[78]

Fact and fiction have been merged seamlessly together and in Cole's view 'the constant danger has been that the 'myth' becomes more 'real' than the historical 'reality'.'[79] He goes on to charge that Spielberg reduces the Holocaust to a clear-cut and reassuring moral tale: 'Spielberg not only affirms our belief in human potentiality, but he reassures us that even the most evil of circumstances can bring out the good in us.'[80] In Cole's eyes, the film is an Americanisation of the Holocaust, offering a happy and worthwhile ending, which allows the audience to leave the cinema feeling that the 'good guys' were ultimately triumphant:

> Spielberg made a movie about power rather than powerlessness. It is a celebration of the freedom of the individual to act, rather than a reflection on the fate of powerless individuals in the face of a regime which decided that Jews should die. Watching Schindler's List reaffirms our belief in the power of the individual.[81]

For Cole, a further danger is that the Jewish characters conform to stereotypical images: they are weak, featureless, small and feminine. They are powerless to control or influence their own fate and rely instead upon the strong

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[75] Tim Cole, Images of the Holocaust, p. 74.
[76] Ibid., p. 76.
[77] Alan Rosenthal, (ed.) Why Docudrama? Fact – Fiction on film and TV, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999). pp. 366-67.
[78] Omer Bartov, Murder In Our Midst The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 168.
[79] Tim Cole, Images of the Holocaust, pp. 75-76.
[80] Ibid., p. 79.
[81] Ibid., p. 78.

male protector of Schindler. By contrast, Schindler is a larger than life character, he is handsome, charismatic, a saviour 'who is the very epitome of masculinity'[82] and he 'is in essence little different to the heroes in a countless number of Hollywood action movies – from *Superman* to *Independence Day* – who by the time that the credits start to roll have managed to save the planet.'[83] For these reasons, Schindler is easy for viewers, particularly viewers in the West, to identify with: 'Spielberg's Schindler can be seen to represent capitalism tempered by humanism. He is a suitable hero for modern America.'[84] Inga Clendinnen agrees with these comments, adding that in Schindler's List: 'there is not one Jew who exhibits even a hint of valour.'[85] The Jews are unheroic characters, black marketeers who are open to bribery and unwilling to share, and she concludes that: 'If someone strong, fearless and virile – an Oskar Schindler – does not act on their behalf, they are doomed.'[86]

Tim Cole is certainly not alone in criticising the film in this way and what follows is my own critique of Schindler's List. But this is not meant to be a critique of the film based purely on its historical accuracy and it is not a critique based on comparison to other, possibly 'better', Holocaust films. It is a critique based on the value this film has in the context of secondary school education. This distinction is important, because the value of the film for academics is not the same as the value of the film for teenagers, or even their teachers and this will become clearer still, when the academics' concerns regarding the film are considered together with the teachers' own observations and conclusions. [87] Included in this critique will be a more general discussion and examination of the use of video and film material.

Undoubtedly one of the issues surrounding the use of a film is the sense of narrative coherence that it imposes on events. During the interviews, one of the teachers stated that 'What [we] tend to do is use a whole story, a progression, so that it can be linked with – and what happens next, we'll find out next week.'[88] Educationalists often recognise and promote this progressive or narrative style approach.[89] For example Chris Husbands argues that:

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[82] Ibid., p. 82.
[83] Ibid., p. 79.
[84] Ibid., p. 81.
[85] Inga Clendinnen, Reading the Holocaust, (New York: Palgrave, 1999). p. 206.
[86] Ibid., p. 207.
[87] For example, there is much written regarding the Zionist overtones particularly at the end of the film. For most viewers in a school context, this would have little relevance and would not influence children's perceptions of the Jewish people or Israel.
[88] History Interview 1.
[89] See also Pamela Mays, Why Teach History? pp. 22-26.

> Narrative shapes are built into the way we think about the past. This is true for both academic historians and pupils and teachers... At their most basic, narrative shapes differentiate history from chronicle... Some of the narrative shapes are on the grand scale: they relate the rise, the consolidation and the fall of great empires... on smaller scales too... We give a narrative shape to the French Revolution, to the First World War... In all these cases we are using story to give a shape to experiences as a way of understanding them.[90]

There is evidence to suggest that narrative approaches make learning easier. As Michael Howe states: 'any procedure that serves to link disconnected items is likely to aid learning.'[91] This may in part account for the popularity of Schindler's List amongst teachers and students. This film has been made in the style of a classical narrative. Although other elements are incorporated so that at times there is a documentary feel to the images, the story nonetheless starts with the introduction of a flawed main character and ends when the 'mission', of rescuing 'his Jews' has been completed. The main character is through the course of the film, transformed into the 'hero' – very much in accordance with the usual and familiar Hollywood attributes of being handsome, courageous, virtuous and good. The narrative style and adoption of already accepted 'norms' with regards to character presentation and development, provide students with a format they know, a format that all popular Hollywood blockbusters use. For this reason, it is easy to identify with; there are no complexities or surprises for the regular film viewer. This film introduces the subject matter, the Holocaust, in a recognisable and use-friendly manner.

As well as imposing a logical, progressive order on events, narratives also encourage personal identification and an emotional connection with the subject.[92] As one of the teachers I interviewed indicated, this is an important pedagogic challenge in teaching the subject:

> I think the biggest pitfall, hurdle, we have is the concept that History for kids, is five minutes ago. You try and look back sixty years, seventy years, how do you do it?... I use a timeline of my life, you try and relate it to the person with history. From my point of view, you have to do it from the person, because they can't get a concept of a year ago let alone seventy years ago... that's the most difficult thing.[93]

Personal identification as an aid to learning is extremely important. In order to understand history, students need to empathise with and relate to the individuals involved and they need to recognise the significance of past events to the present.

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[90] Chris Husbands, What is History Teaching? pp. 45-46.
[91] Michael J A Howe, A Teacher's Guide to the Psychology of Learning, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd Edition, 1999). p. 38.
[92] See also RE Interview 2.
[93] History Interview 2.

Asking a 14 year old to comprehend the reality of six million people being murdered, is asking for a level of comprehension that most adults would struggle with, but as one teacher stated:

> I find that children can relate more to [Schindler's List]... if you talk about 6 million Jews – it's a lot...particularly the less able children... you have that visual trick with the girl in the red coat, if you relate it to an individual, children are much more likely to understand that.[94]

It seems that the use of particular scenes can help children identify with the characters and this in turn will have an impact on their ability to learn and to maintain interest in a subject. It should be noted, after all, that what is expected of students is not only that they learn the facts, but also that they understand why things happened and how this impacted upon people from whom they are very distant, not only in time, but also in cultural heritage and age. Students are attempting to grasp historical circumstances that arose out of a political and cultural milieu, affected and influenced by adults.[95] As one teacher said: 'Until you are actually teaching History, you realise... their idea of time and their idea of relevance and current affairs is totally different to ours.[96] Further evidence of this could be found in the students' reactions. Several teachers said that they couldn't quite grasp why the Jews took so little action in response to the Shoah and this was because they were applying their own moral frame of reference: 'They find the idea of the little resistance quite unbelievable. They can empathise and put themselves into the shoes of the victims to a certain extent, but they still apply their safe, secure morals in terms of 'if anyone did this to me I'd...'[97]

By providing a narrative with visual stimulus, this film (and to an extent this applies to any film) is able to fill in some of the gaps in a student's awareness. Overall it has been argued that: 'Potentially film, whether primary 'actuality' or secondary reconstruction, can offer an experience of the past and sustain attention in a way that cannot be matched by other means.'[98]

However, one of the main criticisms of Schindler's List, is that due to the imposition of a narrative structure, it is simply too neat. The ending is, on the whole, a happy one: Schindler's Jews survive – not one of the main characters dies, the

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[94] History Interview 1.
[95] Chris Husbands and Anna Pendry, 'Thinking and Feeling. Pupils' preconceptions about the past and historical understanding', in Arthur James and Robert Phillips (eds.) Issues in History Teaching, (London: Routledge, 2000). p. 129.
[96] History Interview 8.
[97] History interview 9.
[98] Farmer and Knight, Active History in Key Stages 3 and 4, p. 42.

men and women are reunited and the on-screen text reassures us that it was worthwhile because Schindler was successful in saving these Jews, their children and their grandchildren. A coherence and structure are imposed on this period of history, when in reality this did not exist. This kind of neatness also implies that what happened was ultimately 'meant to be'. The viewer, whether student or adult, is drawn in by the characters who survive, the fate of the less fortunate, while alluded to, is not emphasised and therefore the film cannot help but end on a positive note as Loshitsky notes:

> All of the film's Schindler Juden survive because they were clever or good or brave or loyal or beautiful... The effect of justifying each act of survival is to reassure the audience of the rightness of the workings of history, and to diminish the outrage at the senseless and brutal murder of millions of people.[99]

As a narrative, it is unlikely that the film could have ended in any other way and as a product of Hollywood, where the heroes invariably triumph and the common good is usually achieved, the film is in many ways predictable in its sentimentality. This doesn't mean, though, that it should necessarily be dismissed because of its narrative rather than analytical mode. As a story it can have a positive impact. As Chris Husbands comments:

> Storied forms are used to address wider, more complex ideas, and to stimulate *ways of thinking* about the past and about the ways in which the past was experienced. It becomes possible through the narrative to address more abstract ideas about the assumptions and beliefs of past societies, about the ways they worked or failed to work, and about how people represented their relationships with each other.[100]

While these benefits of a narrative approach are considerable, it is necessary to bear in mind the problems associated with this. Heinz Streib examines these in detail from the perspective of Religious Education, which has its own narrative identity, and while his comments have been made in relation to other issues in Religious Education, his conclusion is relevant to Holocaust education and the methods employed by History teachers:

> I regard the narrative approach as one of the best we have for education in our 'communities of remembering and storytelling'. But we have come to understand this approach as antiquated... Religious education and its narrative approach are affected by, and entangled in, the modern development of mass media and myths.[101]

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[99] Yosefa Loshitzky, Spielberg's Holocaust Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997). p. 137.
[100] Chris Husbands, What is History Teaching? p. 48.
[101] Heinz Streib, 'Mass Media, Myth and Narrative Religious Education', in The British Journal of Religious Education, volume 20, 1997-1998, 49.

The problem of narrative misrepresentation is not easily dismissed and this has been put at its most severe by Omer Bartov:

> A relatively minor and quite extraordinary case has been transformed into a representative segment of the "story" as a whole, obliterating, or at least neglecting the fact that in the "real" Holocaust, most of the Jews died, most of the Germans collaborated with the perpetrators or remained passive bystanders, most of the victims sent to the showers were gassed and most of the survivors did not walk across green meadows to Palestine.[102]

One teacher I spoke to expressed something of this concern when asked why she chose not to use this film in her RE lessons: 'Because it's too involved in a story of one thing... so unless you're going to spend an awful long time on it and really have good links with your History department, I think you're in danger of showing this thing as the bigger picture.'[103] This concern, though, was not expressed by anyone else and on the whole, it seemed that in the school context, this is unlikely to happen. The film, even if only shown in part, is not shown in a vacuum, there is work conducted in the classroom after watching it. As one teacher explained: 'After watching the films and the discussion, they did poetry and we did our own sort of memorial... put their poetry on the wall and they were really, really good and really sensitive and they had obviously been moved by it and did have strong opinions on it.'[104] And the importance of this method has been made by other educationalists:

> The extent to which the video excerpt promotes historical understanding in pupils will depend on what is said and done afterwards – on the quality of the follow-up work by you... whether this is in the form of teacher exposition and questioning or pupil activities.[105]

One other teacher made a similar comment stressing that the film should not be used in isolation as this would present an over-simplified picture.[106] In good teaching there needs to be a symbiotic relationship between the film and the understanding of the events it depicts:

> I think for our kids this is one of the most powerful things because their lives revolve around the moving image, television and films, so if you have a movie like that, it is really powerful. So we spend quite a long time watching that as well – I've just had a lesson where we looked at the section where the selection process is going on in the work camp...It's really good because we've gone through the whole process in class and they can actually see it.[107]

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[102] Yosefa Loshitzky, Spielberg's Holocaust, p. 46.
[103] RE Interview 3.
[104] History Interview 5.
[105] Terry Haydn, James Arthur and Martin Hunt, Learning to Teach History in the Secondary School A Companion to School Experience, (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 174.
[106] History Interview 3.
[107] History Interview 11.

The same point was made by another teacher:

> We nearly always look at Anne Frank and Schindler's List, the bit in Schindler's List with the red coat, that's a bit more personal. We try to look at more individual poetry and prose rather than a lot of the textbooks [which] have facts and figures and that is beyond their comprehension really. If you are talking in millions to them it is beyond their realm of understanding.[108]

One important aspect of the current debate about the impact of the media is, as we have seen, a concern as to whether the distinction between historical fact and fiction is, in our culture, no longer clear. Is it helpful for the distinction to be blurred further by a Hollywood movie version of reality, one that is introduced as 'normal' to school children? Beverley Southgate succinctly outlines the problem:

> The very word 'docudrama' announces the problem, referring as it does to some sort of hybrid – something that is in part 'documentary' (and therefore supposedly factual), but in part also 'drama' (where intrusions of 'fiction' are permissible and even expected). The difficulty lies in clarifying those distinctions.[109]

And one of the teachers stated, in a manner that is inherently troubling, how this translates into the classroom: 'Often when I show Schindler's List, kids will say 'this didn't happen sir did it?' And I would say 'yes it did, this is 100% accurate, this is what happened'. For me I find it very emotional.'[110] As Loshitsky argues, the movie does appear at times to be more documentary than film: 'The black and white, hand-held cinematography of *Schindler's list* reinforces the truth claims of the film. The film seems "old", suggestive of genuine documentary footage.'[111] Would an audience viewing the film within the context of a History or RE lesson (as opposed to a film studies lesson) even be aware of the stylistic devices being utilised in order to engage and maintain their attention? This concern was voiced by Tim Cole when he stated that the film was being used 'almost as a primary source'[112] and one teacher expressed a similar discomfort:

> One of the things they quite often have asked to see is Schindler's List and I've never actually used that because it tends to be used in its entirety and I'm not sure that watching a whole load of actors is the right thing to be doing, I think you do have to be using the original film.[113]

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[108] History Interview 5.
[109] Beverley Southgate, History: What and Why? Ancient, Modern and Postmodern Perspectives, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 150.
[110] History Interview 2.
[111] Yosefa Loshitzky, Spielberg's Holocaust, p. 122.
[112] Tim Cole, Images of the Holocaust, p. 75. See also Yosefa Loshitzky, Spielberg's Holocaust, p. 83.
[113] History Interview 6.

Even if the film is presented to students as essentially a work of fiction rather than fact, this could distance the events depicted even further from reality. There is a certain safety involved in watching a movie, there is an awareness that no actors were injured during filming and that any suffering shown is 'pretend'. As one teacher put it: 'Some kids do find it hard to get through that is it a pretend film, is it a real film'.[114] For the younger audience as well, there is the confusion over having seen these actors in other roles – this applies particularly to Liam Neeson, who played both Oskar Schindler and a Jedi knight in the Star Wars adventure film. Given the volume of available resources for this topic, other video sources could be selected that avoid this difficulty altogether, a view one teacher, who did use the film, contemplated:

> To a certain extent you have to consider with Schindler's List, is it worth spending three hours watching this, or is it better to have a quick scene and a documentary type video which I think is more effective because it is real people. If they are watching Schindler's List they know it is actors and they are watching 'scenes' they are more likely to be talking and not paying attention.[115]

Finally, it should be acknowledged that the presentation of fictionalised events as historically accurate can potentially be very damaging and representations of the Holocaust presented as factual, when indeed they are not, can open the door to revisionism and distorted historical interpretations.[116] The impact this criticism has on the value of the film in secondary education may, however, be limited. After all, debates about whether we are 'mythologizing' the Holocaust, are ultimately arguments for academics – not school children and assuming that follow-up work is done and this is of a balanced and factual nature this can be avoided. [117] What is striking from the interviews I conducted was that both pupils and in a more sophisticated way nearly all of the teachers were fully aware of the issues involved in using fictionalised versions of events.

This perception of the issues was further in evidence in discussions over the use of documentary film and original footage. Many of the teachers I interviewed also used documentary films in the classroom. On the surface, this type of film avoids many of the difficulties associated with Schindler's List. Inga Clendinnen believes that 'we listen differently to stories which are "real", however naively or awkwardly reported, from stories however beguiling which we know to be

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[114] RE Interview 3.
[115] History Interview 9.
[116] Tim Cole, Images of the Holocaust, pp. 187-188. See also Beverley Southgate, History: What and Why? p. 157.
[117] Ibid., p. 6 and also see Yosefa Loshitzky, Spielberg's Holocaust, p. 3.

invented.'[118] Of course it is possible to argue that documentaries can produce the same shallow and temporary reaction in the viewer as Schindler's List. As Omer Bartov argues in Spielberg's Holocaust, documentaries are problematic as well because viewers cannot protect themselves from 'authentic' footage and scenes that are particularly graphic can provoke feelings of revulsion or sympathy, rather than empathy.[119] The difficulties students have relating to larger-than-life characters like Oskar Schindler still exist when watching the emaciated survivors of the camps. However, this was not the view of the teachers I interviewed. The shocking nature of many of the documentaries on the Holocaust was regarded positively:[120] 'it engages [the students], hooks them, they want to then talk about it.'[121] In addition to the initial attention grabbing effect of shocking documentary footage, many of the teachers also believed that this type of film has an impact on the students which is more pronounced because of it's 'reality': 'If it's something like documentary which is true and they're living it through that person and they can actually see what is going on, if it's something that's re-created it's not the same feeling.'[122] This view was shared by many of the teachers:[123]

> I think they do identify that these are real people because it's very different, the whole scenario, the whole way in which you're teaching it, it is not marvellous colour film, it's quite clear that it's something that happened fifty years ago or more... They can clearly see that, that is a real event... It's not in the scenario of a video game, so you don't get that insensitivity.[124]

There is a danger with overtly shocking material, that the response this provokes could be inappropriate precisely because of its graphic nature. But while this concern was recognised, none of the teachers I interviewed had directly experienced this, even though they were in some cases teaching this in a short period of time and one History teacher when referring to a particularly graphic documentary said that:[125]

> It grabs their attention; it grabs the attention of anybody. It has the impact it was designed to have I think... it takes them beyond the excitement, there's a point up to which violence, death and all that sort of thing has a voyeuristic interest, it takes [students] beyond that, which is where it is useful.[126]

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[118] Inga Clendinnen, Representing the Holocaust, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). p. 172.
[119] Yosefa Lostitzky, Spielberg's Holocaust, pp. 52-54.
[120] See also History Interviews 4 and 8.
[121] History Interview 9.
[122] RE Interview 1.
[123] See also History Interview 3 and RE Interview 1 and 3.
[124] History Interview 6.
[125] Richard Dimbleby's Return to Belsen (BBC).
[126] History Interview 8.

As with film, though, the use of documentaries should not be accepted without question either. Any film, whether fictional, semi-fictional narrative, or documentary is conveying a pre-constructed message. And like History teaching itself, film is not an objective medium. For example, some of the footage shot in camps immediately after the war served the dual purpose of demonising the enemy and justifying the war to a weary general public. Even Claude Lanzmann in his epic and highly acclaimed documentary Shoah had a clearly defined intention.[127] A structure has to be imposed on all films and artistic representation of facts cannot be avoided. As Illan Avisar argues:

> In general, cinema [this also applies to film] is a formidable tool for recording historical events, communicating information, spreading familiar ideological views, or conveying propaganda that is either conservative or subversive, and it is also a rich medium and a complex formal system used by artists to express inspiring visions.[128]

The consensus among the teachers was that most students were more than capable of differentiating between fiction, fantasy and reality and I am sure that it is for this reason that the majority of the teachers using Schindler's List, rather than or together with documentary footage did not feel uncomfortable or compromised. We need also to reflect upon Loshitsky's point that: 'whether we like it or not, the predominant vehicles of public memory are the media of technical re/production and mass consumption.'[129]

I would also want to make the point that there was evidence of a very wide range of resources being used even if Schindler's List was unusual in its ubiquity. One teacher commented: 'Artwork is useful and documentaries on the liberation of the camps just for its pure shock. We look at the Jewish sculptures at Yad Vashem and I ask 'what was the artist trying to say?'... I get them to do their own response.'[130]

Other teachers referred to different resources and teaching methods as central to developing understanding. The more enthusiastically received by the students, the more successful it was considered to be by the teachers. This enthusiasm generated interest and was seen as essential in aiding the learning experience. One RE teacher, when I asked if the Holocaust was a topic the students got involved in,

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[127] See for example: Omer Bartov, Murder in our Midst, pp. 172-173.
[128] Ilan Avisar, Screening the Holocaust, p. x.
[129] Yosefa Loshitzky, Spielberg's Holocaust, p. 98.
[130] RE Interview 3.

replied: 'They love it, they absolutely love it because it's creative writing.'[131] Another teacher believed that field trips and first hand experience were important because:

> You can't teach [better than] if it's something they've done and it's their own personal experience, there's no substitute for a real person saying and second best is documentary of a person saying it. But actually taking the kids and making it real... it's like I can explain to the kids what it's like to go to Auschwitz and I take their questions, but it's better to take them there and for them to experience it... I can read to them about it, but actually going brought up a lot of questions about me as a person that I wouldn't have had from reading a book.[132]

A very similar sentiment was expressed in relation to the impact a visiting Holocaust survivor had on students:

> Very, very powerful and it was interesting that he bought this book that he sells and practically every child brought one... three of them came up to me at the end of the day and one of them was in tears and one of them was a boy, tough lad, got lots of 'street cred', because he was just so shocked.[133]

In contrast to the above, enthusiastically mentioned resources, is the use of the Internet in classrooms. This resource did not seem as popular. It was referred to by several teachers and as more schools become equipped with Information Technology (IT) suites, it is likely that this method of research will become more widespread. As Robert Stradling observes: 'The Internet is quickly becoming a new teaching and learning resource for the History classroom. Its great strengths are that much of the material on the Net is regularly up-dated... and the information available is in digital format so that... [it] can be downloaded.'[134]

It is also a fact that many UK homes, libraries and colleges now have computers and a large proportion of students will have access to these when doing homework. Of the teachers who did use this resource, it was not used unreservedly: 'Some students, you just wouldn't [allow], but some groups are more able and quite interested if you let them. We do use the Internet quite a lot.'[135] There also seemed to be doubts regarding its accessibility and overall use:

> There is too much information actually in terms of the Internet and what they can access. They have great difficulty in doing just a little bit of research, they

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[131] RE Interview 5.
[132] RE Interview 3.
[133] RE Interview 4.
[134] Robert Stradling, Teaching Twentieth-Century European History, (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2001), p. 171.
[135] RE Interview 2.

> find it really difficult to find information that was worthwhile for them because they are overloaded. It is really dense, it's really complex.[136]

The information online relating to the Holocaust is massive. For example, I found 884,000.00 references by searching just *one* popular search facility and as James Arthur and Robert Phillips state: 'In an information-rich society, the problem is how to cope with all the information available and assess its trustworthiness, utility and significance in answering a particular question.'[137] Access to more information in terms of quantity, does not mean that students will be able to automatically learn from, organise or thoughtfully engage with this.[138] As with the visual resources, it is the work done before and after that will determine its value.[139]

Teaching Issues

Of the History teachers I interviewed, two studied the Holocaust as an in-depth unit of work with their year 9 groups.[140] This meant that about eighteen hours was spent in the classroom, in contrast to the usual time of between three and eight hours that the remaining History and RE teachers had available. Both of the teachers who did the in-depth study thought there was a danger of the subject becoming sensationalised if it was taught as a shorter unit and they both gave similar reasons for this: 'If you can't do it in-depth, you end up showing just the worst bits.'[141] And: 'You just want to give key things that stand out, the murder of the Jews and the millions of people that were killed in the concentration camps.'[142]

Although I never asked the teachers generally whether they would prefer an in-depth study as opposed to a shorter unit, from the comments they made regarding the students learning capabilities, it is possible to conclude that most don't necessarily agree with the sentiments expressed above: 'I think you may get more sensitivity out of them by spending a shorter time on it in terms of understanding what has happened. Sometimes if you spend too long, you lose the impact.'[143] The need to maintain interest, as well as impact, was also referred to: 'If you spend too long on anything in lessons, even if you think it is really important the kids can't cope with it. After a while they switch off, which leaves them with a negative idea of

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[136] History Interview 9.
[137] James Arthur and Robert Phillips, Issues in History Teaching, p. 103.
[138] www.google.co.uk
[139] Ibid., pp. 99-111. See also Robert Stradling, Teaching Twentieth Century European History, pp. 171-192.
[140] History Interviews 3 and 9.
[141] History Interview 3.
[142] History Interview 9.
[143] History Interview 6.

something which is really important. It is quite a fine balance.'[144] It seems that as with other aspects of teaching, it is an awareness of the dynamic process of teaching and learning that will make either approach successful. As one teacher replied when I asked whether the students ever lost interest in the subject: 'They can do... it can go on too long if you don't get it right, the groups not right, it varies with every group in that respect. It's a fine line.'[145]

Whether the unit was done in three hours or eighteen hours, there seemed to be issues regarding context and continuity. Either, aspects of World War Two had to be neglected: 'There are parts of World War Two that come in with the Holocaust, so they get background, but the focus is not on World War Two as such, the reasons for it, the focus is on the Holocaust';[146] or aspects of the Holocaust had to be neglected, for example the history of anti-Semitism, as discussed above.

Continuity through subject matter was considered important and it may be for this reason that narrative is used so frequently: 'We do the First World War in the first half a term, Second World War in the second half a term and then the Holocaust as an in-depth study.'[147] The logical progression of subject matter, as well as specific events within each subject should provide a framework for students that helps them develop: 'There is a progression and it's probably appropriate that we do it at three different times in quite different ways, I'm not sure you can teach it and leave it behind. I think that you have to teach it at the level they are at, at that moment.'[148] One RE teacher discussed the effect that the removal of continuity and context appeared to have had upon her students:

> We used to do Islam and Judaism and they used to learn a tremendous amount and come out of it with a whole picture of that religion and now you can't really do that and I sometimes wonder if they really do understand it. They can become confused, they come out with Sikh ideas within Hinduism and what have you and I sort of think it's so bitty, they can't see a whole picture from it, where does that come from, where does that lead to.[149]

Ultimately though, it seems that no matter how long was spent on the subject, it was unlikely to be long enough in terms of developing a clear and accurate level of understanding: 'I think it's adequate to give them a decent understanding. I still don't think you can really understand the Holocaust in six weeks, I think that this gives

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[144] History Interview 5.
[145] History Interview 8.
[146] History Interview 9
[147] History Interview 3
[148] History Interview 4.
[149] RE Interview 1.

them a really good basic knowledge.'[150] I would argue, that this applies to many subjects within the curriculum and not just the Holocaust. For example, the complex and horrific issues raised by a study of the nature of the First World War would also be difficult to convey in the time available.

The placing of the subject within a pupil's development is also an important and complicated issue. Several of the teachers I interviewed commented on the impact that issues of lesson timing could have upon students. One History teacher specifically referred to the age group at which this unit was taught: 'I have argued that year 9 is too young to teach, I do think it's the wrong time to teach it, but then again when do you teach it, because that's the only time when you're going to get the whole band of ability range into the picture to teach.'[151] As this teacher acknowledges, though, if it was not taught at this age (or younger), it may not be taught to everyone at all. When I conducted the next interview, I asked another History teacher whether year 9 was too young for teaching this topic and he replied: 'I don't agree with that, there is a snobbery against young people that they're not empathetic, reflective or intelligent enough and that is not true.'[152] The responses I received regarding the enthusiasm of students and the activity this produced tend to back up this view and indicate that year 9 students are able to cope with the subject matter.

Other factors teachers referred to included the general situation of this age group: 'At fourteen they are maximum adolescence-sing at the time and they've got a lot going on in their lives, they're picking GCSE's... some of them have got a lot going on.'[153] As well as having to deal with personal changes and developments, students are as mentioned above, in the process of choosing their GCSE's when this unit is usually covered in the summer term. The implications of this are that a large proportion of the History or RE class will already know that they are not continuing with this subject in the next school year and they could therefore pay less attention than in classes where they intend to continue studying. Again, these issues are not unique to Holocaust teaching.

In addition to this problem, for RE and History teachers who cover a similar area in further depth at GCSE or A' Level, there is an awareness that repetition needs to be avoided: 'You also want to avoid going through too much because of

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[150] History Interview 9.
[151] History Interview 2.
[152] History Interview 4.
[153] History Interview 5.

the GCSE and A' Level. The way you do it, what you are doing, the time of year affects it – all sorts of things like that.'[154] And there are more immediate and basic factors to be aware of:

> Before lunch they are hungry, after lunch they are sleepy. Last period it's like 'it's last period why bother', just before a big holiday and option choices as well. The opportunities for maximum learning are quite few and far between... The big problem for any inner city school like ours is the behaviour of students... It's a constant battle with these things and if they've had an argument with their friends in the class before, they're being abused at home, someone's ill, all those things do impact their learning.[155]

In view of the government's wider agenda for the subject and the links it seeks to forge with Holocaust Memorial Day and a wider public concept of active citizenship, it is interesting to note that the majority of the teachers I interviewed did not observe Holocaust Memorial Day at all for a variety of reasons. The main reason related to the date this day falls on. For History teachers (excluding those that do an in-depth study) the unit on the Holocaust is usually taught towards the end of the summer term and therefore January 26 is simply the wrong time of year:

> This year we wanted to, but the timing was awful, the timing of Holocaust Memorial Day wasn't at the right point in the scheme of work... We didn't feel it was right to do this day until they understood the events itself and to suddenly pop up with an assembly maybe or poems if they didn't have a background understanding wouldn't have worked particularly well.[156]

As well as being at the wrong time within the school year for year 9 History pupils who are studying the compulsory unit on the Holocaust, there were concerns expressed regarding bringing this in for younger students who had not yet studied this unit at all: 'I don't know if it would work with year 7 or year 8 because they wouldn't have that background.'[157]

Some teachers saw the whole day as something of a 'fad': 'I think as with a lot of things in education, somebody brings it up and its flavour of the moment and everything goes on it.'[158] As with all 'fads' the enthusiasm for it dissipated quickly and several schools that had participated in the first year, have not done so since. It also seemed that it was down to individual teachers to take ownership for this if they wanted to observe the day and because of a lack of time and resources this was not usually possible.

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[154] History Interview 8.
[155] History Interview 9.
[156] History Interview 5.
[157] History Interview 5.
[158] History Interview 1.

The issue of continuity raised earlier when discussing the role of narrative in history and the importance this had in developing understanding, was also raised in relation to Holocaust Memorial Day:

> We tend not to do anything on Holocaust Memorial Day, I tend to feel when we do things in isolation, it doesn't work if they are taken to a topic without the understanding... I sometimes feel that about Armistice Day, that people are given this stuff to read out, but they haven't really got the understanding of what it is they're reading... I fear that the Holocaust day could end up the same way unless we've done some careful preparation.[159]

Three of the teachers I interviewed, two History and one RE, did observe the day to differing extents. The RE teacher said that: 'We hold a minutes silence with our classes, that's it school-wise, that's all we do and that's a personal thing.'[160] One of the History teachers conducted an assembly for the whole school during the week in which Holocaust Memorial Day falls, and the other History teacher only observed the day with her year 9 group, as they would be studying the Holocaust at this time as part of their in-depth unit:[161]

> We don't do it with other groups within the school. I think in a way that if we were to have one day, when we focus on the Holocaust with all the year groups, I think it would almost detract. We spend a great deal of time on it [in year 9] and give them the whole background and to say 'right year 7's it's Holocaust Memorial Day, lets do something to recognise that fact', they would have nothing to hang that on to, there would be no context.[162]

Pupils' Understanding of the Subject

All the teachers I interviewed were certain of the value of teaching the subject for their pupils, though they were aware that the subject was not an easy one to teach and that pupils' understanding varied according to age and ability. As one History teacher explained:

> I think the AS people really do understand it and have really researched it, they've gone out and bought books and we have the tape of the David Irving trial and we had a superb debate around that. They really get into it.; they know their stuff and they've got all the facts and they took Irving's argument apart and I was really pleased with that. Year 11, I guess what they do is learn what is necessary to answer their exam questions, which I guess is not the same as understanding why it really happened. What year 12 have got that year 11 haven't is a kind of long-term conceptual understanding of how the thing grew and where the ideas came from. Year 11 will probably tell you that Hitler created

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[159] History Interview 6.
[160] RE Interview 5.
[161] History Interview 4.
[162] History Interview 3.

> a lot of these things, whereas year 12 will be able to tell you that he went to a Catholic seminary and a lot of Catholics still believed at the time that the Jews were murderers of Christ and even though he wasn't a Catholic later on in his life he may have been influenced. They can give it a broader context. Year 9's appreciation will be largely descriptive and narrative. That's probably not fair to some of them but there will be some of them who will be empathetic and will relate on an emotional level and will write pieces of work that show an understanding of what individuals might have gone through. There is a progression and it's probably appropriate that we do it at three different times in quite different ways. I'm not sure you can teach it and leave it behind.[163]

What this indicates is that even between pupils of sixteen and seventeen there is a significant gap in maturity and therefore in ability to understand the subject. At fourteen this gap is much wider as the same teacher emphasised:

> I think it's almost a different subject by the time they get to year 12 compared with what it was in year 9. I don't think you can say the Holocaust that you do in year 9 is the same topic as in year 12. You're broadening your knowledge, broadening your understanding. There's a big historiographical development to get hold of, it's so much more interpretative. It's called the Holocaust but I don't believe it's the same subject.[164]

An RE teacher confirmed this perception of what pupils could achieve as they grow older. At GCSE students can wrestle with theological questions about evil, suffering and the existence of God, as well as tackling the sophisticated arguments advanced by theologians and writers such as Rubenstein, Wiesel and Berkovits. Not only age, but ability is also an issue in reading these works:

> We just sort of break it down; you do it as simply as you can. We read that through and [ask] 'what does it mean?', 'what is it saying there?' because in GCSE there are people of all abilities, there are some very, very bright students... and you've got ones who can look at the idea of right and wrong and can form their opinions, but sometimes find it difficult reading things or writing their ideas down, so a lot of discussion, a lot of 'what does this actually mean'.[165]

Another RE teacher confirmed the leap in understanding between year 9 and GCSE level arguing that 'I think you can get more of an empathetic response, a really significant empathetic response because they are more mature', but was less certain that the students could grasp the theological ideas put forward by writers such as Fackenheim and Rubenstein commenting that: 'They've got a basic grasp of them; the board doesn't demand that much of them, so they have a simplistic understanding of it really.'[166]

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[163] History Interview 4.
[164] Ibid.
[165] RE Interview 1.
[166] RE Interview 4.

Clearly the greatest challenges lie in presenting the subject at year 9 to fourteen year olds. As one History teacher commented:

> I think they have a good understanding of what happened, I think some of them are still hazy about why. It's very difficult to explain why. I encourage them to ask as many questions as possible. A lot of the home works will be thinking about what we've done and writing down any questions they may have or thinking about what we've done and writing down any questions they have or thinking about things they'd like to address. A lot of these things are to do with 'why didn't the Jews fight back?' It's so hard, I read a lot round the subject and I'm saying in one breath you need to separate out the Germans from the Nazis, then I read the book Hitler's Willing Executioners and the fundamental argument is that everybody is responsible. But you can't teach that at year 9 because they don't have the capacity to understand.[167]

What is interesting about the last teacher's comment is something that I had not considered before I began my research and which provides a good example of some of the difficulties in trying to gain understanding of the issues. When I initially began the interviews, I did not include a question on the attitude of students towards Germans. In the second History interview I conducted, the teacher told me that he had to: 'separate out a latent anti-German prejudice which is already there.' To see whether this was an isolated case, I decided to ask other teachers if they had noticed the same attitude among their students. Many of them had:

> Rather than anti-Semitism it tends to be anti-German and it's really tricky because through the Holocaust work they tend to be very anti-German and I'm forever telling them it was the Nazis and that's different. I used to live with some Germans, so I tell them, the Germans that I lived with were very embarrassed about their grand-parents behaviour and just how they deal with it, again trying to bring it down to a human level, but they do struggle and the lower ability kids tend to have a very 'oh that's wrong reaction', if that makes sense?[168]

It also seemed that this anti-German attitude has not gone unnoticed by wider society. The German ambassador on a visit to the UK in December 2002, accused the British education system of teaching children to hate Germans by concentrating too much on Hitler and Germany's Nazi past: 'History teaching in British schools... fuels xenophobia by focussing solely on [the] country's Nazi past.'[169] Worryingly, the existence of this prejudice did not seem to cause too much concern among the teachers I interviewed. In some schools the students were quite xenophobic in their attitude and behaviours, but on the whole this was dismissed and it was deemed to be caused by trivial rivalries: 'A lot of them when we're talking about Germans will

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[167] History Interview 3.
[168] RE Interview 3.
[169] Jeevan Vasagar, 'History teaching in the UK stokes xenophobia, says German Envoy', Guardian, 9 December 2002.

bring up football... I think mainly it is from home, definitely.'[170] Another teacher expressed a very similar understanding: 'I'm sure that's related to football. There used to be some anti-German feeling and I've come across to some extent when I've taken them to Berlin, but I do feel that these days it is related to football, rather than going back to the wars.'[171]

Even if the cause of these attitudes among students is trivial, the result as one teacher observed, is that misunderstandings already exist when they come to teach historical topics:

> When we start off doing World War One [they] will be 'oh the Germans' especially the 'weaker' kids, the bottom set... I've had to say to them 'look, first of all we're studying World War One so Hitler's not even included...' They are very anti-German the 'weaker' students, I think the more able (I sort of blanket them there), but the top sets do seem to have less of that reaction.[172]

If these misunderstandings potentially create or foster an existing prejudice among students, I would argue as I did earlier with regards to anti-Semitism, that it is important this is addressed and managed in order to avoid inadvertently encouraging these attitudes. Resources again can help with this as one teacher recognised:

> I mean you have to be very careful when teaching it so you're not suggesting that in any way, because they can be very quick. I think as well with Schindler being a German, that helps because that makes them realise that it wasn't really the Germans, it was the Nazis that were involved and Schindler was actually a Nazi, which for a lot of them takes a bit of thinking to get their head around the idea, the fact that he was a Nazi, this counter-acts that [anti-German feeling] as well.[173]

The issue of anti-German prejudice is not an argument against exposing children of fourteen to the study of the Holocaust, but it is an example of the need to recognise the potential for misunderstanding.

<u>Conclusion.</u>

The findings after the questionnaires were analysed seemed rather negative, the National Curriculum was only loosely followed, the QCA guidelines were not widely used, teaching time was insufficient and teachers were concerned about their own level of knowledge and the students' understanding. The Holocaust did not

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[170] History Interview 5.
[171] History Interview 6.
[172] History Interview 5.

appear to be taught within any specific context and it seemed that it was largely being used as a 'yardstick by which to measure human behaviour'. The questionnaire results implied that the National Curriculum was not being used, or implemented effectively and was therefore failing to provide the national standard which is its goal. These findings were all examined within the interviews, and although the interviews confirmed in some respects information provided by the questionnaires, overall, the interview results were far more positive.

This subject particularly was credited with engaging and impacting upon students where other subjects failed to do so. One teacher said that: 'out of all of them this will be the one with the most discussion.'[174] Another felt that:

> It's a unique opportunity to get students involved in a subject. I rarely see a class where you have everybody engaged in what they're doing. You rarely get students saying 'this is crap' (sic). There is a unique fascination about it and a willingness to learn and enquire. I think that's important in history because you don't often get the opportunity for kids to come up with their own enquiries and answer their own questions.[175]

There may be a multitude of superficial reasons for this, for example, the enthusiasm of the teacher and the range and content of the materials available to use, however, it seems that this is one topic that continues to remain relevant and make a lasting impression upon the students:

> I think out of all the units in year 9, occasionally it's the easiest to teach to some extent because of the impact it has on the students and it's probably one of the topics they become really absorbed in, actually find fascinating – but this is not the right word to use... You get some very good conversations and you get some really good work out of the students.[176]

It is possible, of course, that the teachers I interviewed were more positive and enthusiastic than is 'normal', simply because they agreed to the interview in the first place. It is unlikely that the less enthusiastic would have done so. What this suggests is that from the questionnaires I obtained an indication of the range of Holocaust teaching, some good, some not, whilst from the interviews a picture of best practice emerged. It is also worth noting that the teachers I interviewed had to make general and often sweeping statements about their classes, because each class is different and each year the classes change. Some of their replies and my

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[173] RE Interview 2.
[174] Ibid.
[175] History Interview 3.
[176] RE Interview 2.

questions required them to give their own opinion of the effect of their teaching upon students and this will always be highly subjective.

Many of the teachers spent a considerable amount of their own time researching the Holocaust and arranging resources and this showed a level of commitment I had not expected. This is also contrary to the perception of some academics, for example Deirdre Burke, who states that:

> The classroom is the most fragile link in the chain of remembering for the future, yet it is clearly the most important link. Our combined efforts are but drops in the ocean, and we must recognise that the bulk of teaching will be undertaken by teachers who lack our commitment and our knowledge. We need to explore ways of strengthening this link to ensure that the experience of both teacher and pupil in encountering the Holocaust is a positive one.[177]

Another important and positive finding of my research was that contrary to my initial assumptions, teachers try hard to avoid falling into the trap of robbing the Holocaust of its uniqueness and clarity by treating it merely as an example of some more global phenomenon. Teachers were very clear that when they made comparisons with more recent events their aim was to help students understand the past by reference to events that are more recent and not the other way round. It is however, a cause for concern that anti-Semitism and the history of anti-Semitism featured so scarcely. Geoffrey Short's conclusion to his own survey were very similar to mine:

> The vast majority of teachers are committed to Holocaust education, but see its value in terms of combating racism rather than anti-Semitism. In fact the nature and history of anti-Semitism was the area most often omitted as a result of the shortage of time. Anti-Semitic comments from pupils rarely cropped up and on the odd occasion when they did... they were not responded to appropriately.[178]

While some findings were positive, this does not mean that all aspects of Holocaust teaching in schools is unproblematic. Realistically, the gap between academic idealism and teaching practice is likely to remain. This is due to the pressures of time, student ability and behaviour, the curriculum and resources. Whilst it is possible to agree with the sentiments expressed by Shulamit Imber, after conducting the interviews and visiting the schools, hers does not seem a realistic or achievable goal:

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[177] Deirdre Burke, 'Holocaust Education Teaching and Learning' in Remembering for the Future, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), vol. 3, pp. 515-519.
[178] Geoffrey Short, The Holocaust in the National Curriculum', in The Journal of Holocaust Education, vol. 4, 1995, pp. 167-188, 186.

> Every teacher who wishes to teach this chapter in human history first needs to be a student, building a concrete base of knowledge. After teachers have acquired the information and feel emotionally ready to deal with the subject, then they also need to be equipped with various interdisciplinary approaches on how to teach the Holocaust in the classroom.[179]

For very similar reasons, the gap between the National Curriculum aims and the reality of the classroom are also likely to remain. As stated earlier, the National Curriculum has a set of four main aims. From the questionnaire and interview results, I feel confident in concluding that the aims to establish standards and to promote continuity and coherence are largely not met. The questionnaire results have been tempered by the interviews, but whilst there were many similarities between schools, a child moving from one to school to another is likely to receive an inconsistent and therefore, incoherent education on this subject. Even if it is argued that these aims should not be applied to individual subject matter, it is the case that in some schools the entire compulsory unit on the Holocaust is not taught at all.[180]

I would also argue that the resources, examples, concepts and ideas used by teachers within the classroom are unlikely to come from the most accurate or academically reliable sources. They are far more likely to be the most commercial and easily accessible sources, those endorsed by popular culture, it is for these reasons (among others) that Schindler's List remains popular. Criticisms of the academic value and integrity of Goldhagen's work, Hitler's Willing Executioners have also been made. For example, in a discussion of recent writings on the Holocaust, Michael Burleigh says of this particular source: 'It has become an event rather than a book... The book seems to have appealed to the desire in some quarters for a simple version of the story.'[181] Yet, several teachers are using this resource uncritically. The controversy this particular book has caused is likely to pass unnoticed by many teachers, simply because the critiques will not receive the same commercial exposure as the original book did. It would be unrealistic to assume that teachers are in a position to scrutinise each text and video, simply because of the time constraints they are subject to. At the same time, this uncritical use of sources was not true of the majority of those I interviewed. Although they might not always frame their arguments in the same way, there was plenty of evidence to show that many teachers have a sophisticated grasp of the questions

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[179] Shulamit Imber, 'Directions in Holocaust Education in the Twenty First Century', in Remembering for the Future, vol 1, pp. 520-521.
[180] When arranging the interviews I did speak by telephone to two History teachers from schools in Wiltshire who did not teach the Holocaust at all.
[181] Michael Burleigh, Ethics and Extermination, p. 201.

surrounding popular memory and representation raised by academics such as Tim Cole

As well as using the most commercially successful and easily accessible resources, teachers are also imparting their own values and moral frameworks to students in their choice of resources. The government does not provide a concrete list of resources to use and because teachers can choose the resources they prefer, this does mean these may not be the most academically reliable, instead the resources best reflect the teachers own values and opinions. This can be done overtly; for example, when the teacher advises the class on the enormity of the subject and the appropriate response and behaviours the students are expected to display. Or, covertly when they avoid discussing the fate of homosexuals because they are aware of existing homophobia and do not want to enter this 'moral' debate. This is by no means a criticism of any of the interviewees or questionnaire respondents because the curriculum and history are not value free areas. Even so it is, a point worth highlighting.

The resources used and the values inherent in the lessons are both likely to change over time. To aid students with their learning and make the subject more accessible and understandable there could be even less focus in the future on anti-Semitism and those aspects of the Holocaust that are unique. If anti-Semitism is being left out of study on this unit by some teachers because it is not considered an issue for many students, it is possible that this will become even more commonplace. While I am able to conclude from my interviews, that the Holocaust is not being used entirely as a general example of racism or prejudice, the danger that it will evolve into this remains. By over-looking anti-Semitism and its role in the Holocaust, students may be left with a confused understanding of both the Holocaust and of the Jewish people.

If the main resource used is Schindler's List, this understanding could become more confused. It will be an understanding firmly based on negative stereotypical images, presented in a quasi-factual manner. This will ultimately lead to inaccuracies and it could contribute to what Tim Cole has labelled the 'Myth of the Holocaust'. As Yosefa Loshitsky states:

> The film [Schindler's List] reifies the fragile moment of transition in historical consciousness from lived, personal memories to collective manufactured memory. Furthermore, this moment signifies the victory of collective memory as

> transmitted by popular culture over a memory contested and debated by professional historians.[182]

If the Holocaust is attaining a mythical status generally, we ought to be especially conscious of this when teaching so that the facts, not the fiction are remembered. If students are taught a history that does not stand up to rigorous scrutiny, this could make teaching about the Holocaust dangerous. As one History teacher said: 'They [students] believe anything and... you can give them such a simplistic view. The simplistic view is more traditional, is very easy for Holocaust deniers to knock down because the reality is, it is not always factually true.'[183]

At the beginning of this chapter, I stated that in the conclusion I would include some suggestions on how the most can be made from studying this unit. I do not intend to provide my own Schemes of Work or my own reading and viewing list, my suggestions are more general and they are based on my own observations from the interviews.

The first suggestion concerns cross-curricula links. As I have already stated, students need a variety of teaching materials and methods in order to learn effectively. While many of the teachers I interviewed employed such a variety, this could be made even more effective if stronger cross-curricula links are made. This would allow the subject to be taught from a broader perspective and students can therefore, learn more than if it is taught as an isolated unit. This was something that was referred to during the interviews. One teacher told me that: 'I also wanted the art teacher to be here to talk to you because they do a... lot of work on Holocaust art and the images that were portrayed. We do a joint project, we do an assembly together, the art department and myself on Holocaust awareness.'[184] There was also a general awareness that cross-curricula links could be established, and may be beneficial:

> At the moment our cross curricula links with English aren't as good as I would like them to be... We are willing to make those links and it would be sensible... If they do the books related to the historical input, it would make a lot of sense, what they tend to do, if they do cover it, is they tend to do this potted historical intros.[185]

By having stronger links, aspects of the Holocaust that do not fit easily into

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[182] Yosefa Loshitzky, Spielberg's Holocaust, p. 3.
[183] History Interview 8.
[184] RE Interview 5.
[185] History Interview 8.

one subject can be introduced and discussed in another. For example, the history of anti-Semitism may not fit easily into the History unit, but this could then be examined at the same time (or a term earlier) in a RE unit. It will also allow time for issues that are related to studying the Holocaust and are important to be covered. For example, it may not be appropriate within History lessons to look at forms of resistance. This could be complementary to those lessons (particularly in helping students empathise and understand people's actions) and could be covered in another subject such as English.

Stronger cross-curricula links will also balance out the likely impact of less available teaching time in History – the only subject in which the Holocaust is compulsory. Some teachers were reporting that less time was being allocated to History lessons within the curriculum and this inevitably has a negative effect on the content of the lessons. Although it is not possible to predict future developments in education, there is a possibility that more time will be allocated to vocational subjects (a move strongly advocated by many government officials). The establishment of cross-curricula links would compensate for a loss of teaching time in History.

This could also meet and possibly avert any future attempts to have the unit removed completely from the National Curriculum. I raise this as a concern because there is an ongoing debate in the media between politicians, academics, teachers and the public regarding the content of the History curriculum. From many quarters there is a growing consensus that too much emphasis is placed on the Second World War and Hitler within the History National Curriculum. For example in June this year, The Independent reported that Charles Clarke, the Secretary of State for Education had:

> Ordered a review of the school History curriculum after complaints that pupils spend too much time learning about the Nazis... Ofsted, the education standards watchdog, supports the criticism, saying most pupils are opting to study Hitler's Germany as a specialist topic.[186]

If in-depth studies were no longer an option in year 9, a shorter course, supported by work in other subjects could provide the same overall depth. Similarly, if the Holocaust was removed from the GCSE or A' Level syllabus, but it had been thoroughly taught in year 9, it would still be a valuable, well-rounded, unit. If it was

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[186] Richard Garner, 'Clarke Orders a Review of School History Teaching,' cited online at: http://education.independent.co.uk/news/story.jsp?story=415839

removed from year 9 altogether, this could have a devastating effect because so few pupils choose History at GCSE and A' Level.

This type of approach is not without its difficulties, apart from being time-consuming; the syllabus for each subject would have to be adjusted so that these links could be made and there are also concerns that are more general and Arthur James and Robert Phillips highlight a few of these in Issues in History Teaching.[187] James and Phillips argue that themes can get in the way of the lesson content and consequently students become unsure of what the teachers are trying to do. Discussion can be seen as less important and when 'real' examples are used which are often not from the students' direct experience, the value of these examples is diminished. Finally, some subjects use 'hooks' and this can make it difficult for students to tell the difference between a 'hook' and the substance of the lesson.

The second of my suggestions relates to resources. The sheer volume of material available makes choosing resources difficult and this is compounded by the pressures teachers face with regards to time and the influences of popular culture. The implementation of a government produced resource pack could be equally problematic, but some guidance would be beneficial. This would also limit the impact of popular culture on classrooms since resources would not be chosen because they receive the greatest amount of public acclaim. Again, though, I am not advocating the introduction of a list of 'approved' resources, simply a means of obtaining a more informed guidance. The way this subject is taught will continually change to suit both students and teachers, this evolution will become even more pronounced as the survivors, and those directly influenced by the Shoah die out. As one History teacher said: 'It'll be interesting to see over the years, with the deaths of Holocaust survivors and losing that first hand experience – how it changes and how we change in the classroom to try and make it real.'[188]

Finally, I feel that there is a need for a greater emphasis on the religious aspects of the subject. The Holocaust primarily concerned religious people, Jews and Christians. History teachers in particular appear to be neglecting this aspect. This may be because children are not as religious as they were, or it may be that this is considered an area for RE teachers to tackle. I shall return to this theme in my final chapter.

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[187] Arthur James and Robert Phillips, Issues in History Teaching, p. 141.
[188] RE Interview 4.

With this problem in mind, I asked some of the RE teachers (because they taught Judaism more in depth than their History colleagues) whether they thought there was a danger of Jews being perceived by their students as history's victims. Largely, the replies I received erred towards the positive: 'I think possibly they might [see Jews as victims]... We do also focus on other things, such as festivals, the family, synagogue, worship... we don't just focus on the Holocaust'[189] and again:

> I think overall, everything else that they learn about Judaism shows them about the people, their beliefs and a culture... I think they sort of see them as a race that faces challenges but goes forward and learns from the past to educate about the future... things like Passover for instance, one of the bits they have to answer on the coursework is 'what do they learn from the past, how do they see it now and what is it like for the future?' So when you're looking at Judaism, you're looking very much to the future.[190]

However, the danger remains, particularly in History lessons where there is little or no focus on Judaism or the reasons for anti-Semitism, that anti-Semitic images will be inadvertently established in young minds where no images existed previously. Given the complexity of the issues and the time constraints, the presentation of a series of negative stereotypes of Jews throughout history (Shylock, perpetrators of the Black Death and child murderers) without a thorough explanation of the reasons for their existence may be counter-productive.

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[189] RE Interview 2.
[190] RE Interview 1, see also RE Interviews 3 and 4.

Chapter Six: Towards a Christian Theological Approach to Holocaust Education

In the previous two chapters I have presented my findings on the way in which the Holocaust is currently taught in a range of British secondary schools, and I have also highlighted some of the perceptions of teachers about the problems and challenges that this undertaking presents. At the end of chapter five I made some suggestions as to the kinds of practical pedagogic changes that could be made in the light of my findings. In the current chapter I shall discuss some of the broader ethical and philosophical issues the teaching of the Holocaust raises from a Christian theological perspective and the contribution that theology can make to their resolution. I am also aware that such an exercise will inevitably be dialogical in nature. Given the severity of the challenges that the Holocaust presents in the realms of pedagogy, philosophy and ethics, Christian theology cannot simply suggest answers to such questions, but is itself challenged in its own methods and assumptions when it confronts them. I shall begin by discussing some of the issues raised by the teaching of the Holocaust in the school History syllabus, making use of insights drawn from Christian theologies of history and from political and liberation theologies. I shall then discuss the teaching of the subject within the RE syllabus and its relationship with the practice of overtly confessional Christian theologies.

The Teaching of the Holocaust within the School History Curriculum: Some Theological Perspectives.

As we have seen from an analysis of both the legislative framework provided by government and from the comments of teachers, the teaching of the Holocaust comes burdened with expectations that pupils will be presented with and assimilate a wide range of beliefs and values about their own individual behaviours and about the just ordering of society. It is noticeable, and not perhaps surprising within an increasingly pluralist society, that these values lack any explicit religious underpinning. Instead, government makes appeal to such norms as democracy, tolerance, human rights and multi-culturalism. Increasingly important within this discourse in the last few years has been the concept of citizenship, the teaching of which became compulsory in 2002. The use of such language appears to be designed to be acceptable to all History teachers in secondary schools whatever their personal religious beliefs.

It is important to note, however, that over and above the scepticism expressed by some teachers as to whether such values can be taught successfully by reference to the Holocaust, there remains a more fundamental debate amongst History teachers as to whether their subject should attempt to convey ethical norms to pupils at all. As one practitioner, Alison Kitson, has observed:

> There is an ongoing debate whether we should teach the Holocaust as history in a conventional sense, focussing on knowledge, skills and understanding, or whether it transcends normal conventions and acts solely as a vehicle for highly significant moral lessons which will ensure that such an event will never be repeated.[1]

A particularly trenchant critic of the belief that the subject can be used in the latter way is Nicholas Kinloch, the head of History in a large comprehensive in Cambridge. For Kinloch, the purpose of History teaching is to train pupils to become good historians - by which he means technically proficient in handling sources. With regard to the Holocaust he comments:

> There may be good reasons to teach children that killing other human beings is generally undesirable. Whether the History class is really the place for such lessons, however, is debatable.[2]

In Kinloch's view it clearly is not. Not all practitioners would agree. In the same issue of Teaching History, the Holocaust Educational Co-Ordinator at the Imperial War Museum, Paul Salmons, argues that 'important moral and ethical questions are within the scope of the History teacher, but that these need to be approached from an understanding of the historical situation.'[3]

A number of criticisms can be made of Kinloch's position. One of these is pedagogic. The ability to understand sources in the way he desires cannot be so easily divorced from the acquisition by pupils of empathy, which in turn depends on their own personal appropriation of the material they are studying. It can be argued that Kinloch's kind of non-formative 'objective' approach works against such an outcome. As the Holocaust historian Robert Frey has suggested:

> Given the contempt for the rich spectrum of human emotional, spiritual and intuitive capabilities evidenced by many scientific approaches and

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[1] Alison Kitson, 'Challenging Stereotypes and Avoiding the Superficial: A Suggested Approach to Teaching the Holocaust', in Teaching History, no. 104, September 2001, pp. 41-48, 41.
[2] Nicholas Kinloch, 'Parallel Catastrophes? Uniqueness, Redemption and the Shoah', in Teaching History, no. 104, September 2001, pp. 8-14, 13.
[3] Paul Salmons, 'Moral Dilemmas: History teaching and the Holocaust', in Teaching History, no. 104, September 2001, pp. 34-40, 35.

> methodologies, there should be little reason to wonder why individuals education in the contemporary rational spirit have minimal capacity for empathy.[4]

The educational theorist Chris Husbands agrees. Establishing a sense of personal relevance to the learner and developing an empathetic response are steps towards creating what Husbands labelled, an 'interpretative framework.' Husbands' claim is that for History teaching to be meaningful, students need to be able to 'explain why some historical periods and events have a significance *for them*[5].

Kinloch's whole argument is also open to more general criticism. His assumption that the study of History is purely a matter of technique divorced from questions concerning the standpoint and beliefs of the historian seems a curiously old-fashioned stance reminiscent of the kind of positivism associated with the nineteenth-century historian Ranke's plea to teach only what happened in the past. It is certainly one that takes little or no notice of postmodern critiques of the concept of value-free objectivity in researching and teaching History. It can also be argued that Kinloch's insistence on bracketing out questions of meaning and value from the study of the past is itself far from value-free. What is taught in any syllabus and how the material is interpreted depend upon prior political and moral decisions, as the ongoing debates about what should be included in the teaching of British history make abundantly clear.

Christian theology can provide further correctives to Kinloch's approach to the teaching of the Holocaust. Within the Christian tradition from its origins in the Hebrew Bible, the study of history has always been seen as charged with both redemptive meaning and moral lessons. As has often been pointed out, the idea that the unfolding of human history is neither merely cyclical nor devoid of meaning has been a major contribution to the development of the western intellectual tradition.[6] Nevertheless the application of such a theology of history to the study and teaching of the Holocaust requires a great deal of tentativeness and caution. As the theologian William Dean has recently pointed out, the horrific events of the twentieth century have put a severe strain upon theologies of history which claim to find

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[4] Robert S. Frey, 'Is objectivity morally defensible in discussing the Holocaust?' In Harry James Cargas, (ed.) Problems Unique to the Holocaust, (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), p. 101.
[5] Chris Husbands, What is History Teaching? p. 133.
[6] For a helpful brief discussion of the traditional Christian view of history see Beverley Southgate, History What and Why. Ancient, Modern and Postmodern Perspectives, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 40-48.

evidence of supra-historical redemptive meaning in human events.[7] Outstanding amongst such events has of course been the Holocaust itself, and the question of God's providential intervention in, and control of, human history has been a major focus of both Christian and Jewish theological responses to the catastrophe.[8] The Holocaust scholar Harry James Cargas surely speaks for many Christian commentators when he writes:

> Traditional Christian theologies of history need to be re-examined. Generally, history has been regarded as the unfolding plan of God for humanity, or as a Weltanschauung based on the providential action of God in human affairs. For many today, it is difficult to see how the Holocaust fits into such concepts.....Those of us who are nearly overwhelmed by Auschwitz feel a terrible inability to put its relevance into any pattern.[9]

Even so, such caution about delineating any overarching pattern in human history is not the same as abandoning any kind of critical moral engagement with historical events, in itself a form of hermeneutic nihilism and as such just as much a form of faith commitment as either a Christian or a secular humanist moral approach to the teaching of History.

I would argue that modern re-workings of the traditional theme of eschatology within Christian theology in the light of the Holocaust provide such a degree of caution whilst rejecting the claim that no moral pattern or framework can be sought within the study and teaching of History. One of the first post-Holocaust theologians to wrestle with this problem was the Protestant Reinhold Niebuhr in his 1949 study Faith and History. Here Niebuhr argued that an eschatological hope in the final summation of human history in God not only counters any naïve secularist belief in human perfectibility (which the events of the second world war had just seriously undermined), but also challenges Christians to avoid political quietism and instead to engage in human politics:

> Ideally the faith and hope by which the church lives sharpens rather than annuls its responsibility for seeking to do the will of God amid all the tragic moral ambiguities of history. This faith and hope are the condition of a true love "which seeketh not its own". They are the condition for a courageous witness against "principalities and powers", which is untroubled by punitive strength in the hands

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[7] William Dean, 'History,' in Gareth Jones, (ed.), The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2004), pp. 95-109. At the beginning of the twenty-first century Dean sees Christian theologies of history uneasily poised between a pessimistic view that the historical process is obdurately non-redemptive and opaque and a more cautiously optimistic stance.

[8] For a good overview of a wide range of approaches to this subject see Dan Cohn-Sherbok, (ed.), Holocaust Theology: A Reader,(Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2002).

[9] Ibid., p. 66.

> of these powers and which does not mistake the judgments of the church as an historic institution for the final judgment of God.[10]

The German theologian Jürgen Moltmann, who has been much exercised by the moral and theological implications of the Holocaust, agrees with Niebuhr in emphasising that the search for meaning in history from a Christian eschatological perspective does not entail a flight from political reality:

> That we do not reconcile ourselves, that there is no pleasant harmony between us and reality, is due to our unquenchable hope. This hope keeps man unreconciled, until the great day of the fulfilment of all the promises of God. It keeps him *in statu viatoris*, in that unresolved openness to world questions which has its origin in the promise of God in the resurrection of Christ and can therefore be resolved only when the same God fulfils his promise. This hope makes the Christian Church a constant disturbance in human society, seeking as the latter does to stabilize itself into a 'continuing city'. It makes the Church the source of continual new impulses towards the realisation of righteousness, freedom and humanity here in the light of the promised future that is to come.[11]

In a more recent collection of theological essays on eschatology Miroslav Wolf again emphasises that the Christian attempt to find an overarching purpose in human history has consequences in the present:

> Sometime between a shadowy history and eternity bathed in light, somewhere between this world and the coming world of perfect love, a transformation of persons and their complex relationships needs to take place. Without such transformation the world to come would not be a world of perfect love but just a repetition of a world in which, at best, the purest of loves falter and, at worst, cold indifference reigns and deadly hatreds easily flare up.[12]

For Wolf this provides a perspective that ought to shape social practices in the present.[13] In the same volume David Ford considers the eschatological dimension in human history specifically in the light of Auschwitz. Interestingly, he emphasises the difference between the secular practice of History and one that is theologically informed by the Christian faith:

> It is not hard to evoke a counter-history of significance, leading us to attend to people and events largely ignored by historians and using criteria of importance alien to most historiography. Such suspicions have in fact been common in much recent reconsideration of history. It has been one of the marks of postmodern thought at its best that it has drawn attention to obscured histories and subverted the narratives told by the victors through drawing attention to

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[10] Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History. A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History, (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd, 1949), p. 271.
[11] Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope. On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology, (London: SCM Press, 1967.), p. 22.
[12] Miroslav Wolf, 'The Final Reconciliation: Reflections on a Social dimension of the Eschatological Transition', in James Buckley & L. Greogory Jones (eds), Theology and Eschatology At the Turn of the Millennium, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 89-111, 89-90.
[13] Ibid., p. 106.

> their victims. This has rightly affected the telling of Christian history too, whose origins were in the story of a victim and his persecuted followers. It raises sharply the question of the primary perspective of the story. Is it one which can do justice to the primacy of love, justice, gentleness and so on in the Christian witness? That perspective makes people in their ethical, face to face relations primary, and every other level is judged by whether it serves this. And this level is inevitably one which is largely hidden to the historian.[14]

I would argue, however, that this difference of overall perspective need not make it impossible for Christians to engage constructively with those who do not share it in the teaching of the Holocaust, provided - as is often the case – that the latter have a commitment to learning from the past and of seeking its moral significance for human life in the present. Ford brings out both what is distinctive about the Christian view of history, but also where common ground can be found with others in learning from the Shoah:

> Anyone immersed in the double testimony to Golgatha and to Auschwitz is likely to be stretched past their capacity in study, in imagination and feeling to do justice to the Shoah and to God in relation to it. But above all faith is exercised in practical response before one who is believed both to take radical responsibility for the world, to the point of death, and also to call others into comparable responsibility. What this should involve for the Church and its theology after Auschwitz has hardly begun to be faced, but clearly should be a Christian priority for the new millennium... To be before this face that has witnessed Auschwitz is to be summoned to face Auschwitz in his spirit and to be called to accept responsibility for such things not happening again.[15]

Such a commitment to justice seeking and human freedom based upon an eschatological perspective might suggest that making common cause with historians who seek to find a secular humanist narrative within history is relatively unproblematic. But it needs to be recognised that considerable tensions do remain between secular and religious philosophies of history. From Niebuhr onwards, one of the key features of such an eschatological perspective has been a sharp attack upon secular humanist philosophies of history as naïve and unrealistic. In Niebuhr's case this is explicable in the context of his fears over the spread of Communism as a potent and virulently anti-Christian force. In more recent writing it has been part of an often bitterly polemical defence of Christian belief by means of a belittling of secular humanist alternatives. Thus Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart begin their defence of the coherence of Christian eschatology with a scathing denunciation of the Enlightenment belief in human progress and the application of human reason to the alleviation of human ills:

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[14] David F. Ford, 'A Messiah for the Third Millennium', in James Buckley & L. Gregory Jones (eds), Theology and Eschatology, pp. 73-88, 74.
[15] Ibid., p. 85.

> What then of the horror of history? It was the barbarism now steadily receding into the past. It was the eggs broken to make the utopian omelette. The idea of progress was a kind of imminent theodicy or justification of history. All the pains and losses were justified by the goal, whether this was conceived as a distant but finally to be achieved utopia or simply a never-ending progress. (Some theological interpretations of Darwinian evolution spoke of a 'law of sacrifice as the engine of progress'.) So long as the horror could be located predominantly in the past or beyond the bounds of European civilization, this theodicy seemed plausible to many. Everything negative in history was steadily being overcome. It is surprising how often even the idea of death will eventually be overcome surfaces in the utopian dreams of progress, even down to the present day (there are those who pay a great deal to have their corpses preserved in the sure and certain hope of scientific resurrection one day).[16]

Bauckham and Hart make some perceptive points in their argument, noting for example the Christian origins of secular utopianism, though their tone suggests the bitterness of a familial conflict. Whilst they are right to draw attention to the undoubted limitations of Enlightenment thought, their presentation of it verges on caricature. They also draw attention to the way in which the Holocaust has seriously undermined the optimism of both secular and theological liberalism, but unlike Ford, they are much less willing to take seriously enough the challenges which it presents to a providential Christian philosophy of history. What I have suggested is not so much their sharp distinction between secular and Christian views of history, but rather between Christianity and those approaches to history such as that advanced by Kinloch that refuse any engagement with its moral implications. In this respect secular humanists and Christians are on the same and not the opposite side of the barricades when they seek to teach about the ethical implications of what happened in Auschwitz and its implications for human action in the present.

Insights derived from Christian political theologies can further bolster the case for a moral and therefore political engagement with human society in the light of the Holocaust. Western proponents of political theologies argue that on both biblical grounds and in following the example of Jesus, the Christian churches should be committed to working for the implementation of social, economic and political policies based upon justice, peace and a sense of our common humanity as all equally made in the image of God.[17] As the political theologian William Cavanagh puts it:

> Whole areas of the Old Testament are given over to theological reflection on the political life of Israel... If the New Testament opens with Jesus on his way to the

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[16] Richard Bauckham & Trevor Hart, Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology in Contemporary Context, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), pp. 12-13.
[17] A good introduction to this theological perspective is David McLellan (ed.), Political Christianity; A Reader, (London: SPCK, 1997).

> cross it closes with his followers hounded by a political regime described as bestial."[18]

From this starting point the criticism of much traditional theology is that it has ignored these issues in favour of a more narrowly intellectualised and idealist understanding of the theologian's task. It is in this sense that the Roman Catholic German political theologian Johann Baptist Metz defines political theology as 'first of all... a critical correction of present-day theology.'[19]

Metz is a particularly significant figure for understanding the relationship between the Holocaust and the development of post-war political theology in Europe. As the leading exponent of the so-called 'new political theology', he makes it clear that his primary starting point was the challenge of the death camps:

> Should we not have expected to find in the history of Christianity many more conflicts with political power similar to the history of suffering and persecution of the Jewish people? Does not Christianity, in fact, manifest historically a shattering deficit in political resistance, and an extreme historical surplus of political accommodation and obedience? And finally, is it not the case that we Christians can recognize that concrete destiny which Jesus foretold for his disciples more clearly in the history of suffering undergone by the Jewish people than in the actual history of Christianity? As a Christian theologian, I do not wish to suppress this question, which disturbs me above all in the presence of Auschwitz.
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> This is the question that compelled me to project and work on a "political theology" with its programme of deprivatization (directed more towards the synoptics than to Pauline tradition), to work against just these dangers of an extreme interiorization of Christian salvation and its attendant danger of Christianity's uncritical reconciliation with prevailing political powers.[20]

Here the key terms are 'deprivatization' and 'extreme interiorization' implying a rejection of an excessively individual and spiritualized understanding of faith that fails to engage with the concrete realities of human suffering and oppression. By contrast, Metz elsewhere argues that: 'The memory of suffering, on the other hand, brings a new moral imagination into political life, a new vision of others' suffering

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[18] William Cavanaugh, Theopolitical Imagination, (London: T & T Clark, 2002), p. 6.
[19] Johann B. Metz, Theology of the World, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 107.
[20] Johann Baptist Metz, The Emergent Church: The Future of Christianity in a Postbourgeois World, (London: SCM press, 1981), pp. 26-27. For a detailed study of these themes in Metz's political theology see Titus F. Guenther, Rahner and Metz: Transcendental Theology as Political Theology, (Lanham: University of America Press, 1994), pp. 17-107. Guenther quotes an early comment by Metz that in speaking of Auschwitz he intends it to be 'representative of the crisis of the modern age'. Whilst this is helpful in drawing attention to Metz's much wider concern with political and economic justice in the modern world, it should not be used to deny the very concrete engagement with the challenges posed by the death camps as historical events that is made clear in a number of his works. For the quotation see Guenther, p. 25.

which should mature into a generous, uncalculating partisanship on behalf of the weak and unrepresented.[21]

Metz's linking of the aims of political theology to the Holocaust has continued to be influential amongst a newer generation of German theologians. As Jürgen Manemann argues:

> Political theology is a theology after Auschwitz, brought about by the terrible questions: How could it happen that Christians prayed and celebrated liturgy turning their backs to Auschwitz? And how is it possible that theology after 1945 made this catastrophe appear to be merely the echo of a departing thunderstorm and continued to do theology as usual? Political theology first faced National Socialism from a Hitler-centred perspective but more and more it began to realize that it was not Hitler but Auschwitz that was the centre of the period. Furthermore, political theology came to the conclusion that Auschwitz overshadows everything after 1945. Thus Auschwitz is to be considered not only as a challenge to religion, but a challenge to history and politics as well.
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> Political theology, conceived as a theology after Auschwitz, needs to develop a theology which is unable to distance itself from the suffering of people in society and history and the harm that has caused.[22]

The study and teaching of the Holocaust inevitably raises these issues in the most concrete and starkest of forms. As we have seen in the government's thinking it is consciously intended to do so with the National Curriculum claiming that the Holocaust should serve as an introduction to the teaching of several issues relating to citizenship and democracy.

The Anglican Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, has recently suggested one example of an approach to the teaching of the subject that embodies a Christian moral perspective and indicates how this can make a contribution to education in citizenship. His starting point is that of the 'righteous gentile'. Harries states that 'humanity desperately needs good role models.'[23] A political history that starts from the acts of righteous gentiles has, he argues, several benefits. It draws attention to the individual's responsibility to act ethically in the political sphere by focussing on the actions of 'rebels' who acted contrary to the majority of the population. It also raises questions that appear to connect directly with pupils' own understanding of the subject since several of the teachers I interviewed told me that faced with the history of the period the students 'very much perceive they would behave

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[21] Johan Baptist Metz, Faith in History and Society, (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), pp. 115-116. The memory of suffering here has a double referent both to Jesus' suffering and that of human beings in history.

[22] Jurgen Manemann, 'Jewish and Christians After Auschwitz: Reflections from a Political-Theological Perspective', in Elisabeth Maxwell and John K. Roth, Remembering for the Future, vol. 2, pp. 775-786, 775.

[23] Richard Harries, After the Evil: Christianity and Judaism in the Shadow of the Holocaust, (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p. 10.

differently'.[24] Finally, it provides a Christian model for behaviour, but one with a much wider referent and one that seems to be unduly neglected.[25] Of course as with any material chosen to provide lessons that can be drawn from the Holocaust, Harries' needs to be used with care. His assertion that 'for all the books that have been written by philosophers and theologians there is in the end a simple capacity in every human being to distinguish good from evil'[26] can easily be made to sound overly simplistic. There is also the danger that an emphasis on the actions of individuals can ignore or play down the importance of structural factors in influencing peoples' behaviour. It is relevant here to be reminded that several of the teachers I interviewed as well as indicating that pupils considered how they might have behaved in a similar situation also said that pupils seemed to have unrealistic assessments of their own likely behaviour and an inadequate grasp of the context in which people found themselves at the time.

In practice, Harries does not ignore the wider social and moral framework; nor does he suggest that Christian theology can simply provide a-historical moral solutions to the problems raised by the Shoah. Harries believes that the social and political attitudes that allowed the Holocaust to take place need careful examination. Contemporary Christian political theology not only provides critical perspectives upon the Holocaust and its relevance for our own political praxis, it is itself challenged by that history. As Harries argues: 'one way in which the theologians failed the people of Germany was by the excessive emphasis upon the duty of Christians to submit obediently to the ruling powers.'[27] He also draws attention to the consequences of an un-critical, and naïve theological discourse that in the hands of the German Christian Movement provided a spurious justification for racial discrimination and persecution. Above all, an examination of the failure of Christian theology at the time raises the crucial question of: 'how far the church's traditional anti-Judaism, its centuries-long teaching of contempt, prepared the ground and dulled peoples hearts and minds, so that anti-Semitism could take hold with so little resistance in the population as a whole.'[28]

Apart from the need for Christian political theologians to get their own house in order before drawing moral lessons from the Shoah for the benefit of non-Christians

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[24] See for example RE Interview 3.
[25] See Leon Stein, 'Christians as Holocaust Scholars', in Harry James Cargas, (ed.) Problems Unique to the Holocaust. (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), p.144. Stein comments that 'It is ironic that these exemplars of Christian morality are better known in the Jewish community than the Christian.'
[26] Ibid., p. 11.
[27] Ibid., p.13.
[28] Ibid., p.16

a further issue needs to be considered. As I have suggested, the government's choice of ethical norms to be learnt as a result of teaching the Holocaust is deliberately couched in general terms and no attempt is made to ground these in any particular world view. As Duncan Forrester has pointed out, the context in which political theology has to be undertaken in contemporary Britain is a complex one, though certain key features are clear enough. Forrester states that we 'live in a plural society in a secular age.'[29] This description is carefully formulated to indicate the complexity of the situation. Ours is not simply a secular society. Indeed Forrester suggests that in some respects the influence of religion has increased and he attributes this change to a rise in 'conviction politics'. On the one hand, religious leaders are consistently referred to in support of political issues, and on the other, leading politicians are far more willing to acknowledge their own religious beliefs and their influence on their policies than at any time in living memory. But what is equally true for Forrester is that whilst there still appears to be sufficient common moral beliefs amongst the population for the government to make the kind of appeal it does to democratic and tolerant social values, there is no longer any agreed world view from which these beliefs can be justified and interpreted. As he puts it, 'the absence of any generally accepted metaphysic or religious position has corroded the foundations.'[30] As the American Protestant political theologian Philip Wogaman has pointed out, this situation creates a serious challenge for any Christian seeking to bring theological insights to bear upon the political process:

> The first political question to be asked by Christians concerns our community of reference. We belong to the church... we are also subject to the state... But exactly how our belonging to the church affects our belonging to the state is not at all clear theologically. Members of "mainline" or "establishment" churches in Western countries do not often have to face the question, because in such settings the church and the wider society involve the same people, the same culture, the same basic values, the same history. That is even true in religiously pluralistic societies.[31]

Within the British context, the theologian and former Anglican bishop of Durham, David Jenkins, makes a similar comment:

> What are the appropriate forms of, and role for Christian education in 'post-Christendom' societies, where the old claims of the obvious and important dominance of Christianity are clearly socially false, however nostalgically clung to? ... And what ought Christian educators to be trying to do in all the societies which seem to have lost their way as to any common religious, cultural or citizenship identity, but are increasingly recognising the vacuum at the heart of

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[29] Duncan B. Forrester, Beliefs, Values and Policies: Conviction Politics in a Secular Age. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 1.
[30] Ibid., pp. 4-5.
[31] J. Philip Wogaman, Christian Perspectives on Politics, (London: SCM Press, 1988), p. 125.

> society about values, common hopes and sources, or resources, for common citizenship?[32]

But I would contend that although it is important to recognise the reality of this situation and to exercise caution and sensitivity within the state school sector in negotiating this pluralism of world views, this need not mean that theologically informed Christian History teachers cannot co-operate with their secular colleagues in teaching the importance of tolerance, democracy and justice as lessons that can be adduced from the Holocaust, even though their reasons for holding such beliefs may derive from very different philosophical bases from those of their secular minded colleagues.

But whilst such co-operation may be both necessary and beneficial, I would want to argue that Christian political theology also has implications for the teaching of the Holocaust within the History syllabus that are potentially more challenging. Duncan Forrester, for example, warns against the view that in contemporary Britain Christian political theology can merely provide an additional ecclesiastical adjunct to predominant liberal values. As he states, 'more is required of theology in relation to values than to affirm and interpret, and by implication justify, the dominant values of the day'.[33] Interestingly, he relates this claim to the history of the Nazi period:

> In challenging rather than confirming the conventional values of our society, we are seeking to confess the faith and make that contribution which only Christianity can offer... When theology sees its role as sustaining and affirming the dominant values of any society it tends to degenerate into a legitimating ideology, the ally and weapon of established social forces, a culture Christianity which potentially has all the problems of the culture Christianity of Germany in the 1930's.[34]

Forrester's reference to 'legitimating ideology' has obvious echoes of one of the most radical forms of political theology, liberation theology. Two of its leading South American practitioners describe one of its key components as 'a critique of ideologies to challenge long-standing expressions of Christianity and so-called Christian societies.'[35] One recent commentator has gone so far as to suggest that 'one could very well summarize the distinctive method of liberation theology as a

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[32] Foreword by David Jenkins, in J. Astley, & L. Francis (eds), Critical Perspectives on Christian Education, (Leominster: Gracewing, 1994), p. xi.
[33] Duncan B. Forrester, Beliefs, Values and Policies, p. 45.
[34] Ibid., p. 48.
[35] Leonardo & Clovis Boff, Introducing Liberation Theology, (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1987), p. xvi. For a more extended treatment of this theme see Juan Luis Segundo, Faith and Ideologies, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1984), pp. 249-275.

challenging of ideological elements in traditional modes of expressing reality.'[36] Whilst this may be an exaggeration, it draws attention to the importance of exercising a hermeneutic of suspicion in evaluating the predominant discourses of any given society or institution which may seek to impose versions of reality that work in the interest of the powerful. Originally applied by South American theologians to the silence of western theology in the face of third world poverty and oppression, this kind of critique of ideology has since become a key critical tool of analysis in a wide range of Christian liberation theologies.[37]

From this critical theological perspective it could be argued that the teaching of the Holocaust within the History syllabus has assumed such a prominent place within British secondary education because it is a vector for the justification and transmission of the dominant political ideology of the day, liberal capitalism. This does not mean that I believe that we should reject the values of tolerance, democracy, and support for human and minority rights that the government and many teachers wish their pupils to take away from their study of the Holocaust. As I have just argued, I believe that Christian political theology offers cogent reasons for defending them. It does mean, however, that we should be prepared to subject governmental and academic statements about the self-evident benefits of teaching the subject to more searching critical analysis. Teaching children about the evils of the Holocaust may be a good way of making them aware of the importance of such values, but it may also be a subtle way of asserting the superiority of our own society and its values in a relatively uncritical and unchallenging way. The dangers of moral indifference to the plight of others may be graphically illustrated by the actions of those who stood by or were complicit in the Holocaust, but perhaps the same lesson could be taught by focussing on those who starve in Africa and the part played by unfair western terms of trade and aid in bringing this about. The former is a much safer and less uncomfortable way of bringing home the lesson than the latter. Similarly, drawing attention to the plight of minorities in the Third Reich may sensitise pupils to the ethical challenges this raises, on the other hand it may lead them to avoid confronting them in their own environment.

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[36] Arthur F. McGovern, Liberation Theology and its Critics: Towards an Assessment, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), p. 43.

[37] For an up to date survey and critical analysis of liberation theologies see Christopher Rowland (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology, (Cambridge: CUP, 1999). Rowland defines a hermeneutic of suspicion: 'Its major characteristic is suspicion of the validity of received narratives and explanations with a demand to probe to get at the underlying truth behind appearances', ibid. p. xvii.

As we have seen in chapter 2, concerns about the ideological nature of Holocaust study suggested by liberation theological perspectives are similar to those advanced by a wide range of scholars such as Tim Cole, Carrie Supple and Norman Finkelstein. My research suggests that History teachers are aware of some of the potential pitfalls in teaching the subject, but rarely question the underlying rationale for teaching it at all. In the case of History this kind of questioning is particularly pertinent because as we have seen, the predominant justification for teaching the subject is to inculcate general moral lessons that are not in principle specific to the particular historical context and example that has been chosen. This point is reinforced by a consideration of some of the undoubted disadvantages of the subject such as its complexity, distance from pupils' experience and tendency to reinforce nationalistic stereotypes including anti-German ones.

A further insight from liberation theology is also relevant here. In his groundbreaking book A Theology of Liberation Gustavo Guttierrez draws attention to the way in which the predominant preoccupation of western theology with doctrinal questions of orthodoxy has far less relevance to the theological needs of the non-European and non-North American world.[38] In his recent critical analysis of key themes in liberation theology Denys Turner applies this insight to the Holocaust:

> The historical crises to which Christian theology has had to respond in Latin America have been quite different from those which have afflicted the theologies of the North, whether in the last century or this: Northern theologies have been worked out in response to the phenomenon of industrial development, forced urbanisation, rapid secularisation in the realms of politics and society, the dizzying pace of technological change, the ravages of two total wars on the European mainland and perhaps above all that nightmare, to which those theologies have yet to find a theological response of any degree of adequacy, the racial murder of six million Jews which we call, today, the Holocaust. From the standpoint of Third World theologians, these events which form the 'contextuality' of the theologies of the North, have, except incidentally, passed them by, for through the neo-colonial relations of dependence and marginalisation enforced upon them by the capitalist and post-capitalist economies of the North, their own development in these connections has been very largely arrested.[39]

Whilst the Holocaust represents a major challenge to the whole western belief in human progress and perfectibility through the application of rationality and scientific method on the one hand, and on the other to the Christian belief in divine providence, from other geographical perspectives its importance is far less obvious. Here the use of the word Holocaust to describe the ravages of poverty and AIDS in

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[38] Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation, (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 10.
[39] Denys Turner, 'Marxism liberation theology and the way of negation', in Rowland, The Cambridge Companion, pp. 199-217, 209-10.

many third world societies may be instructive in drawing our attention to very different priorities and needs from our own. Again, the troubling question may be raised as to whether our preoccupation with the moral evils of the Holocaust may not act as a form of displacement activity in the present.

The Teaching of the Holocaust within the School Religious Education Curriculum: Some Theological Perspectives.

Any discussion of Holocaust teaching within RE - and particularly one that starts from a Christian theological perspective - cannot ignore the highly distinctive and in some respects contested nature of the subject within British secondary education. As Enid Mellor points out: 'Controversy resides even in its name. Do we teach Religion, Religious Studies, Religious Knowledge or Religious Education? Or do we, as laid down by the 1944 Education Act... provide Religious Instruction?'[40] Some commentators suggest that one reason for the controversial nature of the subject even amongst its practitioners lies in the peculiarity of its subject matter. As Gabriel Moran puts it:

> It should be noted that religion and education are at some odds. Religion breaks out of the ordinary, that is, what is ordered, controlled and fixed as 'the world'. Education is concerned with bringing experience under control; quite naturally it concentrates upon the ordinary.[41]

A similar argument is developed by Enid Mellor who suggests that religious experience and the 'essentially unknowable' constitute a vital part of religion:

> Religion is more than a set of beliefs, of rules, or rituals; more than a body of literature or a social framework. It reaches the core of the human spirit, its essence is inexpressible by many and expressed by the few. It is unprovable, immeasurable and yet totally real to those who know it. How can something of this be included...Yet how can we omit it and claim to have engaged in Religious Education or indeed in education at all.[42]

Whilst there may be some truth in these contentions, it is not altogether clear that they apply uniquely to the teaching of religion. The study of literature could be said to raise similar kinds of 'extraordinary' challenges. Of far greater importance in current debate is the divide between those who see the subject as being necessarily taught from within a faith commitment and those who reject such an approach in

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[40] Enid Mellor, 'Religion and Religious Education,' in J. J. Wellington (ed.), Controversial Issues in the Curriculum, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 108.
[41] Gabriel Moran, 'Two Languages of Religious Education', in Critical Perspectives on Christian Education, pp. 40-47, 43.
[42] Enid Mellor, 'Religion and Religious Education,' p. 110.

principle. According to one leading educationalist, Jeff Astley, there are two overall categories which Religious Education can come under. The first can be described as confessional, religious nurture, formation or catechesis. The second category is non-confessional, non-evangelistic and non-nurturing. This is education *about* Christianity (and other religions) and this is the type of Religious Education that many educationalists consider to be the proper subject for public education in state schools.[43] The importance of this distinction and the debates to which it has lead were clearly relevant to the RE teachers whom I studied in my research with both approaches in evidence. When I conducted the interviews one teacher told me that they were 'really open with [their] beliefs'[44], while another asserted that 'you're not supposed to talk about your own beliefs about things, I think the whole idea of teaching RS is to give a neutral point of view.'[45]

The Schools Council also accepts this distinction and comes down in favour of the latter. It begins by outlining three interpretations of the term 'Religious Education'. These are, the 'confessional', the 'personal quest' and the objective or 'phenomenological'[46]. It then stipulates that:

> The 'confessionalist' aim, though perfectly proper within a community of faith, is not appropriate within schools serving a multi-belief society... we incline to the view that Religious Education must include both the personal search for meaning and the objective study of the phenomena of religion... Within this wider context 'confessional' teaching can sometimes be heard, both as part of the evidence in the study of a given religion... and as part of the dialogue between the pupils and the world in which they live.[47]

Those who argue in this way claim that the understanding of Religious Education in British society has evolved from a confessional to a non-confessional approach and regard the latter as in some sense more objective.[48] This evolution is deemed to have mirrored a society that has become less Christian and more secular. For example the educationalist Sten Rohde argues that Religious Education should be education *about* religions and there is no legitimate place within this type of education for the confessional type of Religious Instruction. Religious Education

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[43] Jeff Astley, 'Definitions, aims and approaches: an overview', in Critical Perspectives on Christian Education, p. 3.
[44] RE Interview 3.
[45] RE Interview 2.
[46] Eric Lord & Charles Bailey, A Reader in Religious and Moral Education, in (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 49.
[47] Ibid.
[48] See W. Roy Niblett and Marjorie Reeves, 'A Ferment of Ideas on Education', in Christian Thinking and Social Order Conviction Politics from the 1930s to the Present Day, (ed) Marjorie Reeves, (London: Cassell, 1999), pp. 101-122.

has to be descriptive – 'it cannot give religious experience'[49] - and it has to be relevant to the needs of society. Rohde does not claim that the 'ultimate questions', for example those concerning creation and the importance of human life, have no place with Religious Education. He also argues that: 'It is not right that controversial religious material should be kept outside school. Teaching must be meaningful and existential, not dull and harmless, and this means bringing in even what is controversial.'[50] But, he does maintain that Religious Education and religious instruction can be successfully separated: 'Teaching about religions is not the same thing as teaching the observation of all that Christ commanded... This Christian teaching must take place outside school."[51] Robert Ellis concurs claiming that 'for RE to be a coherent subject its syllabus should not in fact include any presentation of the truth-claims of religion.'[52]

Not only secularism but also the multi-faith nature of British society dictates this outcome for educationalists in this camp. As another commentator, Derek Gillard, puts it, Religious Education 'should be a struggle to enable an open communication between religious traditions'.[53] For Gillard 'the ultimate opportunity for Religious Education in a multi-faith society... is its potential for helping people to live together.'[54] Edwin Cox reinforces Gillard's concerns: 'Whatever religious stance you care to mention, you name it we have it, in our present world. The sensitivity is there, but there is no publicly agreed method of describing or expressing it, and every man's ideas are as good as the next.'[55]

Another factor for many of those who reject the confessional approach to the subject is wariness or downright hostility towards theology as an intellectual enterprise. There appear to be several objections to including theology within Religious Education. Firstly, theology is considered to be irrelevant to the needs of modern pupils. In Rohde's view:

> It is often pointed out nowadays that theology and preaching too often try to answer questions in which nobody is interested except theologians and ministers. The lack of interest in the teaching of religion in schools is due to the fact that it is echoing theology.[56]

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[49] Lord & Bailey, A Reader, p. 69.
[50] Ibid., p. 72.
[51] Ibid., p. 74.
[52] Robert Ellis, 'Revelation, Wisdom, and Learning from Religion: A Response to D G Attfield', in The British Journal of Religious Education, vol. 19, 1996-1997 p. 102.
[53] Derek Gillard, The Multi-Faith Society: Problem or Opportunity? August 1991, cited online at: http://www.dg.dial.pipex.com/educ10.shtml.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Lord & Bailey, A Reader, p. 41.
[56] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

The same point is put by the theologian David Brown who says that: 'The word "theological" is in current English sometimes used as a term of abuse, to indicate some over-technically abstract or abstruse point that is not really worth discussing.'[57] Secondly, theology is often linked to ant-intellectualism and indoctrination. Including Christian theology in the syllabus can be seen as a covert attempt to teach confessional Religious Education.[58] As Gabriel Moran puts it:

> Anyone using the word theology ought to be sensitive to the fact that many people are immediately suspicious of the claim inherent to the word. A religious statement clearly has a place in education; a theological statement already carries a judgement whose legitimacy has to be educationally questioned.[59]

On the other side of the argument, W. D. Hudson argues that to single out Religious Education in this way is to make an ideological rather than an empirical judgement:

> There is an obvious difference between education *about* a subject and education *in* it. A school teacher could, for example, pass on a great deal of information about mathematics – such as who have been its most distinguished practitioners, what sort of problems it can solve... without giving the pupils any instruction in the subject itself... When we call someone a teacher of mathematics or any other subject, what we normally mean and are taken to mean is, quite clearly, that he educates the pupils in the subject concerned, not simply gives them information about it... There appears, however, to be one exception... namely teachers of religion, by which I mean of religious instruction, religious education, religious studies, or whatever the latest name for the subject is in schools. It has become fashionable to regard such teachers as educators about, rather than in.[60]

The arguments advanced concerning the need to adopt a non-confessional approach in a religiously plural society have also been challenged. One fear about the non-confessional approach is that there is a danger that in attempting to understand and learn about many beliefs, none will be taught sufficiently well. As the Archbishop of Canterbury has recently argued, Religious Education is in danger of becoming 'a benign tour of picturesque forms of life'.[61] This was a concern shared by one of the teachers I interviewed, who said that: 'we major in three religions, we do Christianity, Islam and Buddhism... they need to be streamlined in terms of

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[57] David Brown, Invitation to Theology, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 1.
[58] Denise Cush, 'The Relationships between Religious Studies, Religious Education and Theology: Big Brother, Little Sister and the Clerical Uncle?' In The British Journal of Religious Education, vol. 21, 1998-99, pp. 137-146.
[59] Gabriel Moran, 'Two Languages of Religious Education', p. 41.
[60] W D Hudson, 'The Loneliness of the Religious Educator', in Critical Perspectives on Christian Education, p. 96.
[61] Archbishop of Canterbury, 'Belief, unbelief and Religious Education,' Millenium Lecture, Monday 8 March 2004, cited online at: http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/page5480.asp

knowing three religions well, rather than millions not very well.'[62] Another referred to the difficulties that occurred when the 'whole religion' was not studied: 'we used to do Islam and Judaism and they used to learn a tremendous amount... and now you can't really do that, you look at certain aspects of this and certain aspects of that and I sometimes wonder if they really do understand it.'[63]

Linked to this concern is another that if pupils receive no in-depth instruction in any one religious tradition, they will fail to grasp what it is like to be an insider in a religious tradition which will seriously impair their ability to understand a range of such traditions. This is a view supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, who believes that such an approach is 'likely to be... of limited educational benefit. It may promote tolerance of a sort, but not understanding... the one thing it does not generate is empathy.'[64] Indeed some educators have argued that this approach does not even result in 'tolerance of a sort'. Patricia Malone in a study of Australian final year students who completed a course on *Studies of Religion* found that, 'the students, who formally studied aboriginal spirituality... showed... a higher level of prejudice against Aborigines... Similarly a number commented on having a better understanding of Islam yet the prejudice against Muslims increased."[65] Overall, Malone concluded that:

> Formal study of religion... has affected the understanding and appreciation of religion of the majority of students. Many students have commented that it has changed their attitudes towards other religions and to a limited extent towards the understanding and practice of their own religious tradition. The data has shown that increased knowledge about religion is not sufficient to change attitudes towards other religious groups.[66]

With regard to the claims of anti-intellectualism and the contrast made between the supposedly closed indoctrination of confessionalism and the supposedly objective and open approach of religious studies, I would argue that this has been overdrawn and that some sort of middle way is possible. As we have seen, the Schools Council, although wary of the dangers of the former, also (albeit tentatively) recognises the need for an awareness of and balance between the approaches. They advise that Religious Education should:

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[62] RE Interview 5. It's worth noting that this teacher was using the same Agreed Syllabus as that of the teacher quoted previously, however, the results were the opposite.
[63] RE Interview 1.
[64] Archbishop of Canterbury, Belief, unbelief and Religious Education.
[65] Patricia Malone, 'Religious Education and Prejudice among Students Taking the Course Studies of Religion,' in The British Journal of Religious Education, Volume 21, 1998-99, p. 11.
[66] Ibid., p. 17.

> Equip [students], not only to handle religious matters sensitively and with perception, but also to handle the classroom situation in such a way that, although 'confessionalist' views are given a proper hearing they are not allowed to override or inhibit the pupils' free spirit of inquiry.[67]

The theologian David Brown is equally tentative in putting forward a case for a confessional approach to the subject. Brown argues that in the study of religion as with many other subjects there is a need for the 'right kind of attitude':

> This is very different from saying that religious belief is required. Indeed, belief can sometimes be a barrier in preventing imaginative engagement with those of very different religious traditions. But equally anyone who thinks of those with belief as fools is unlikely to make much progress in understanding.[68]

Their positions might be described as the weak case for confessionalism within the teaching of RE. A stronger claim is advanced by Edwin Cox who argues for a broader and more inclusive approach to the teaching of religion that aims to overcome the dichotomies set up by educationalists such as Gillard and Rohde. For Cox Religious Education has four broad aims. Firstly, it should enable pupils to understand the contribution religion has made to culture and 'It is therefore something all can do irrespective of their religious background.' Secondly, it can help pupils understand what is believed and how beliefs influence behaviour. This is considered to be especially important now we live in a multicultural society. Thirdly, it can help pupils 'understand that a rational attitude to life includes making up one's mind on certain fundamental or ultimate questions of the nature of life and of human personality.' Finally, it can help pupils decide for themselves what their personal faith stance is going to be. Pupils are informed of the choices available, the implications of each, and are not deprived of their right to make up their own minds.[69] Professor John Hull takes a similarly irenic stance:

> Religious education has three fundamental purposes in our society. First, it seeks to communicate to persons who are not religious a basic understanding of religion. Secondly, it seeks to communicate to persons who are religious a basic understanding of themselves. Thirdly, it seeks to make available, both to the religious and to the non-religious, the benefits of the study of religion.[70]

Whilst I find Cox's and Hull's inclusivist arguments persuasive, I would argue that a further important distinction that has been advanced by Jeff Astley between two different kinds of confessionalism within the teaching of Christianity is of great

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[67] Lord & Bailey, A Reader, pp. 43-45, 50.
[68] David Brown, Invitation to Theology, p. 4.
[69] Lord & Bailey, A Reader, pp. 43-44.
[70] John Hull, The Nature of Religious Education, 1993, cited online at: http://www.johnhull.biz/the%20nature%of%religious%20education.html

importance. He notes that in the first: 'Some argue that its main thrust should be a process of intentional socialisation, formation or enculturation within the faith community, where people learn not only Christian beliefs but also the attitudes, values and dispositions to act that are appropriate to the Christian.'[71] In the second kind of confessionalism, it is argued that educational values 'should be primarily concerned with cognitive understanding and ... should include a critical evaluation of Christian belief.' For Astley, although both kinds of teaching could be described as formative in terms of nurturing Christian faith and practice, the latter, which he terms 'critical-formative', has the greater educational value and goes an appropriate distance in responding to the fears of those who associate confessionalism with simple indoctrination.[72]

Astley's case is in my view of great importance for the teaching of the Holocaust within the RE syllabus. It allows those from a nominally Christian background and crucially those from a firmer faith background to become aware not only of the benefits, but also the possible dangers of religious belief. Engagement with the history of Christian anti-Semitism and of the ethically very mixed part played by Christian believers in the processes of the Holocaust can be particularly efficacious ways of teaching pupils about the dangers of religious prejudice and religiously inspired hatred and violence. This case is strongly made by Geoffrey Short:

> The Holocaust provides a powerful demonstration of the influence of religious tradition in shaping attitudes towards 'the other' and the clear lesson for all faith communities is the need to recognise and act against the potential inherent in their teachings, liturgy and sacred texts to denigrate those outside the community.[73]

But as Rowan Williams argues, if this is to happen some serious engagement with Christian theology is necessary to address the 'need to attend to how religious people themselves identify both conflict and distortion within their systems, how religious reasoning actually works in specific communities and lives.'[74]

From this kind of critical-formative perspective the study and teaching of the Holocaust can provide one of the most striking examples of the way in which Christian religious beliefs have in the past and can in the future foster attitudes of

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[71] Jeff Astley, 'Definitions, aims and approaches: an overview', p. 4.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Geoffrey Short, 'Lessons of the Holocaust: A Response to the Critics,' in The Educational Review, vol. 55, No. 3, 2003, pp. 276-287, 284.
[74] Archbishop of Canterbury, Belief, unbelief and Religious Education.

intolerance and prejudice with frighteningly violent outcomes. As Michael McGarry argues:

> First we Christians need to remember that studying the Shoah is not simply reading about 'what happened to the Jews, but what some' Christians – some still worshipping, others long drop-outs from the Church did to the Jews. The Shoah is a part of Christian history. It is part of our history, if we are Christian. This is frightening; this is sickening; this is for many unbelievable. But the first thing we Christians need to recognize is that we study the Shoah because it is part of our history as well as part of Jewish history.[75]

The theologian Rosemary Ruether puts the case against Christianity as succinctly as anyone:

> The anti-Semitic legacy of Christian civilisation cannot be dealt with as an accidental or peripheral element or as a product of purely sociological conflicts between the church and the synagogue...
> At its roots anti-Semitism in Christian civilisation springs directly from Christian theological anti-Judaism. It was Christian theology which developed the thesis of the eternal reprobate status of the Jew in history, and laid the foundation fro the demonic view of the Jews which fanned the flames of popular hatred. This hatred was not only inculcated by Christian preaching and biblical exegesis, but it became incorporated into the structure of Christian canon law and the civil law formed under Christendom...[76]

Of course it is important not to oversimplify complex issues: a very large scholarly literature has been created on the controversial subject of how far Christian anti-Semitism as opposed to Nazi neo-pagan ideology can be held responsible for the Holocaust.[77] What matters is the exercise of the kind of critical self-questioning of the tradition that does not seek an apologetic sidestepping of the issues. Even today this still cannot be taken for granted. For example, the American Protestant theologian Stephen Davis has addressed the question of Christian responsibility in a worryingly evasive way. Davis begins by quite fairly pointing out that Hitler's regime was hostile to Christianity and derived its genocidal ideology from non-Christian sources. He goes on to accept that 'historic attitudes towards Jews fostered in the church did play a role in the success of the Nazis in achieving their ends.' However when confronted with a much more troubling question Davis argues:

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[75] Michael McGarry, 'A Christian passes through Yad Vashem', in Carol Rittner, Stephen D. Smith and Irena Steinfeldt, (eds.) The Holocaust and the Christian World. Reflections on the past, challenges for the future, (London: Kuperard, 2000), pp. 1-4, 2-3.
[76] Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Anti-Semitism and Christian Theology', in Eva Fleischner (ed.), Auschwitz: Beginning of a new Era?, (New York: KTAV, 1977), p. 80.
[77] For a helpful overview of this topic see M. Saperstein, 'Christian Doctrine and the "Final Solution": The State of the Question', in Elisabeth Maxwell & John K. Roth, (eds.), Remembering for the Future. The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide, (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001), vol. 2, pp. 814-841.

> Were committed Christians responsible for the Holocaust? For the Antisemitic attitudes many of them had, yes. For the silence of many of the others, yes. But were any active and serious followers of Jesus Christ murderers? Here I must say no... It is impossible for any sane person to reconcile Christianity with genocide.[78]

Davis' definition of a committed Christian as someone who would be incapable of committing acts of murder in the name of his or her religion appears to beg many questions, but most worrying is its refusal to engage with actual historical reality and instead to defend a Christian self-image by recourse to an ideal type immune from ideological and political pressures. Here of course there is also some equivocation over the phrase 'active and serious followers of Jesus Christ'. Many Polish Christians were indeed both active and serious in their faith using it as the justification for their actions against the Jews.

In seeking to draw lessons from the Holocaust, as well as facing up to the realities of the past, it is also important for Christians to recognise both the strengths and limitations of their responses to the Holocaust since 1945. Such a reckoning can serve to make their faith more mature and to promote the processes of inter-faith dialogue between Christians and Jews. Given the nature of the History syllabus in schools, and in particular its linking of the subject to the events of the Second World War, it is quite clear that this can only occur within the context of RE. The story of the Christian Churches' rejection of what Jules Isaac called 'the Christian teaching of contempt' towards Judaism can provide a powerful and positive example of self-critical reflection and practical religious response to the potentially harmful effects of religious beliefs. This has entailed a willingness on the part of both Roman Catholic and Protestant Church leaders to repudiate a nexus of harmful and unjustifiable attitudes towards Judaism including the deicide charge, blood libel myths, and derogatory images of Judaism as works-based and 'pharisaical'.[79] This process has not been without controversy and has raised highly problematic questions about the relationship between the Old and New Covenants and the nature of Christology. Whilst some of these issues may be too advanced for detailed study at secondary school level, the more general issue that they raise is not: how can one hold passionately to one's own religious convictions without denigrating

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[78] Stephen T. Davis, 'Evangelical Christians and Holocaust Theology', quoted in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Holocaust Theology: A Reader, p. 310. The article first appeared in The American Journal of Theology and Philosophy in 1981.

[79] For this topic see Alan L. Berger 'Post-Auschwitz Catholic-Jewish Dialogue: Mixed Signals and Missed Opportunities', in Elisabeth Maxwell & John K. Roth (eds), Remembering for the Future, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), volume 3, pp. 601-672; Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), The Future of Jewish-Christian Dialogue, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999); Alice L. Eckardt, 'How are the Protestant Churches Responding 50+ Years After?' in Elisabeth Maxwell & John K. Roth (eds), Remembering for the Future, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), volume 3, pp. 533-543.

those of others and promoting intolerance and violence? Pupils could also profitably be introduced to the concept of inter-religious dialogue as a response to the Shoah in ways that correspond to their own experience of conflict resolution and living with difference within their own environments. Again, this would need to be done sensitively and with an awareness that Judaism as a living religion cannot be defined simply or primarily in terms of the Holocaust, traumatic though that was.[80] My research into the teaching of the Holocaust suggests that although within RE older pupils are able to wrestle with some theologically significant questions to do with evil suffering and the existence of God, the perspectives that I am suggesting here do not feature nearly so prominently.

The benefits of an honest and self-critical awareness in understanding one's own religious traditions and praxis do not only apply to Christianity. For example Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter draw attention to the way in which teaching about the Holocaust can also challenge Jews in the present: [81]

> Students can learn much more about that religion and would see more value in the study if the content focussed on what are the big issues... for example, on some of the issues that Jews (and non-Jews) regard as important for Judaism today as a living religion... From this we derive topics like: how Jews interpret the Holocaust, the political and religious significance of the state of Israel.[82]

Some of these topics can be as painful and challenging for Jews as the history of anti-Semitism has been for Christianity. The tendency in some parts of the Jewish theological world to see the creation of the state of Israel as a God-given 'answer' to the Shoah has been widely debated and criticised. The same is true of the way in which the secular Israeli state appears to make use of the Holocaust to justify its hard-line stance against the Palestinians under the catch phrase of 'never again'. According to the American Jewish academic Marc Ellis:

> Jewish status in the West has advanced in proportion to the establishment and promotion of a narrative that features the Holocaust as central to Jewish memory and experience. That narrative also functions to protect Jewish advancement in America and Israel from the type of criticism generally applied to other communities and nations. The use of suffering as a way of

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[80] Michael Goldberg puts this point succinctly: 'The Holocaust master story's characterization of our ancestors is at its core character assassination.' Quoted in Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Holocaust Theology: A Reader, p. 227.
[81] Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter, 'The Secular Spirituality of Youth: Implications for Religious Education', in The British Journal for Religious Education, vol. 18, 1995-1996, pp. 133-143, 134-5.
[82] Ibid.

> empowerment has, at least in the Jewish case, precipitated the Palestinian diaspora *and* the Jewish exile.[83]

But nor should this kind of questioning be limited only to those within a particular faith tradition since it can have much wider implications. For example, one school I visited looked at the Holocaust, at Jewish responses to it, but also at Jewish history and rituals. The teacher's comment was that 'when you're looking at Judaism, you're looking very much to the future, of the continuation and the importance of passing things on.'[84] This approach was taking Jewish experience of the Shoah to raise a much broader question about all religious faiths: how do they maintain loyalty to the past whilst at the same time coming to terms with drastically different circumstances in the present?[85]

What is important is that both teachers and pupils rather than bracketing out their faith commitments when approaching the Holocaust should be willing to subject them to the kind of critical-formative perspective advocated by Astley. As one teacher told me: 'It's about modelling the behaviour of somebody who is going to be critical about what they read/listen to. If a kid doesn't question, I'd be worried... My classroom is very open so when they leave the room they carry on thinking.'[86]

Approached in this way RE can play a vital part in pupils' understanding of the Holocaust given the tendency of History teaching to ignore the religious aspects of the subject and play down the origins and significance of anti-Semitism in favour of a more generalised focus upon human and minority rights. This focus on the potential of religious belief to create conflict is obviously of wider and acute concern in the present. Paradoxically, the secular framework in which History is largely taught in British schools and which is often overtly hostile to religion is part of a much broader set of intellectual assumptions that have rendered western education singularly ill equipped and ill prepared to understand the power of fundamentalist religious beliefs to generate violence and fanaticism. To take only one obvious example: a perspective in which Islam was seen as no more than an outdated from of superstition incapable of withstanding the force of western secularism and liberalism now seems very outdated indeed.

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[83] Marc Ellis, Practicing Exile: The Religious Odyssey of an American Jew, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), p. 31. See too for this theme his earlier work Unholy Alliance: Religion and Atrocity in Our Time, (London: SCM Press, 1997).
[84] RE Interview 1.
[85] For a good discussion of this issue from the perspective of an Orthodox British Rabbi see Norman Solomon, Judaism and World Religion, (London: Macmillan, 1991).
[86] RE Interview 3.

A further question mark against a purely non-confessional approach to the teaching of RE that has implications for the teaching of the Holocaust concerns the subject's association with the development of spiritual and moral values. Here the government's thinking seems somewhat unclear. Government guidelines for RE talk of 'developing pupils' knowledge' which involves 'understanding of religion, religious beliefs, practices, language and traditions and their influence on individuals, communities, societies and cultures.' Such language might suggest the observational outsider's viewpoint advocated by some as the only appropriate way of teaching the subject. But the guidelines also refer to the pupil's personal development claiming that Religious Education 'enables pupils to consider and respond to a range of important questions related to their own spiritual development, the development of values and attitudes and fundamental questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life.'[87] The same point is made at local level with the Swindon Agreed Syllabus committed to the 'requirement for schools to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.'[88]

Here it is hard to see how questions of truth claims and faith commitments can be so easily side stepped. As Cox puts it:

> Consideration of the nature of people, the purpose of life, our responsibility for natural wealth, all of which are at bottom religious considerations. So our new problems may make us approach religion from a different angle. It may be encouraging that the young seem more alive to these problems... as their zeal for social righteousness expressed in protests and marches, and some of the involved words of their pop songs bears witness. But this is the way in which our secular society can be called religiously sensitive.[89]

Robert Ellis makes a similar point in his criticism of Robert Attfield's defence of the non-confessional model of education:

> Attfield proposes the dominant value modelled by the subject will be one that presents religion as entirely abstract and completely irrelevant to children's lives, due to the necessity for the teachers to be completely value-neutral. His approach is alienated from the values of genuine education, because it does not place any trust in the teacher-pupil relationship or take into account the moral and spiritual guidance which occurs within it, whatever the teacher's imperfections.[90]

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[87] Cited online at: http://www.nc.uk.net/webdav/servlet/XRM?Page/%40id=6004&Subject/%40id=7881&Session/%40id=D_5tUMAqvYc22VM76mHQks

[88] Thinking Together, Swindon Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

[89] Lord & Bailey, A Reader, p. 41.

[90] Robert Ellis, 'A Response to David Attfield'. Ellis's argument here, coupled with his rejection of allowing religious beliefs to be taught in schools, seems to imply that whilst RE should not be value-free the only acceptable values are secular ones.

If it is true that RE raises questions concerned with meaning and purpose in life, the just ordering of society and individual as well as social morality, as these commentators claim, then teaching about the Holocaust can be a powerful means of raising them.

I now want to consider two objections to this argument which apply specifically to RE as a discipline. The first concerns the connection between moral values and the Christian faith. As Derek Gillard argues: 'There is little doubt that the thinking... behind the Religious Education clauses of the 1988 Act was that somehow, teaching pupils about Christianity would make for a more 'moral' society.' However the requirement in the act that RE Agreed Syllabuses should reflect the fact that 'the religious traditions in Britain are in the main Christian' provoked widespread controversy as failing to take into account the increasingly secular and pluralist character of British society.[91] The problems this situation has created for the teaching of RE are spelt out by Linda Rudge who has examined the experiences of those pupils and teachers who would describe themselves as 'nothing' in terms of their religious affiliations.[92] This 'silent majority' are not participant members of any faith (although as Rudge correctly states, this does not mean they are not religious) and as a result the curriculum should take this into consideration:

> If we accept that we are a secularised, though not entirely secular nation... concerned with issues of justice and equality... then the reality of secularity and the broader diversity of spiritual and religious experience should be given much greater prominence... This places additional demands upon RE to form creative cross curricula links at academic and political levels. The value and relevance of the silent majority also indicate that training has to include a sound basis for teachers to understand the complex nature of spiritual and religious diversity in Britain today.[93]

Susanna Hookway makes a similar point contending that there is evidence that children continue to search for meaning, even when structured, formal religion is rejected.[94] In some ways this problem is similar to the one that I have discussed with regard to the teaching of History and the same kinds of sensitivity are required of Christians in both contexts. Nevertheless there are strong grounds for thinking that the Holocaust facilitates an affirmation of common ethical values, and the

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[91] For a clear and helpful discussion of this controversy see Gerald Parsons, 'There and Back Again? Religion and the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts', in Gerald Parsons. (ed.) The Growth of Religious Diversity: Britain from 1945, (London; Routledge, 1994), pp. 161-198.
[92] Linda Rudge, "I am Nothing' – Does it Matter? A Critique of Current Religious Education Policy and Practice in England on behalf of the Silent Majority', in The British Journal of Religious Education, vol. 20, 1997-1998, pp. 155-165.
[93] Ibid., p. 163.
[94] Susanna Hookway, 'Mirrors, Windows, Conversations: Religious Education for the Millenial Generation in England and Wales', in The British Journal of Religious Education, vol. 24 2001-2002, pp. 99-110.

addition of a critical-formative approach to their own tradition on the part of teachers can only reinforce this.

A second difficulty is raised by Shulamit Imber in her discussion of teaching the Holocaust. Imber believes that Holocaust education raises many moral questions and can, therefore, be used as a means to instil ethical values in the young.[95] However, she also sounds a note of caution arguing that Religious Education needs to maintain its distinctiveness as a discipline and not be subsumed under the heading of 'education in morals and citizenship':

> There are natural links between values and citizenship and Religious Education. Religious Education plays a significant role in the area of values education and makes a significant contribution to citizenship education... However, the distinctions between the role of Religious Education and the proposals for values education and citizenship must be acknowledged. The Religious Education curriculum can be neither hijacked for the solution of social ills or harnessed for a programme of training which ventures beyond the development of knowledge, understanding and skills.[96]

There is a very real danger that Religious Education could become obsolete if it concentrated purely on citizenship or moral issues and already some educationalists are arguing for its replacement by citizenship studies.[97] As I have tried to show in this chapter, what needs to be defended is the kind of specificity in dealing with religious traditions and their moral beliefs that can make a valuable contribution to understanding the nature and significance of the Shoah.

If this is done there is no reason why the attacks of those who dismiss theological questions as applied to the teaching of religion and of the Holocaust as irrelevant or abstruse should not be dismissed as mere prejudice. As Edwin Cox argues, what is taught in RE:

> ... should seem worthwhile to the teacher, otherwise his (sic) lessons will lack conviction... They should also seem worthwhile to the pupils. If the teaching is assuming a situation that no longer exists outside the school, and dealing with ideas that are unlikely to have any practical relevance, the academically inclined may still find them interesting as an intellectual exercise, but other pupils are not likely to give them serious attention or remember much that is taught.[98]

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[95] Shulamit Imber, 'Directions in Holocaust Education in the Twenty-First Century', in Remembering for the Future. The Holocaust in the Age of Genocide, Volume 3, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 520-521.
[96] Lynne Broadbent, 'Values Education, Citizenship and the Contribution of Religious Education', in Teaching Values and Citizenship across the curriculum, (ed.) Richard Bailey, (London: Kogan Page Limited, 2000), p. 125.
[97] See the editorial for summer 2002 in The British Journal of Religious Education, pp. 162-169 in which the editor is responding to the position of Professor David Hargreaves who argues that RE should be replaced by citizenship education.
[98] Lord & Bailey, A Reader, p. 42.

No doubt against this argument could be set the more jaundiced view of John Wilson suggesting that relevance is not everything:

> We feel uncertain about accepting past or present authorities, about indoctrination, about the narrowness of sticking to Christianity: well and good. But we then find a vacuum, just because we have no clear idea of what to do instead, and so we mess about, filling in the time in ways which we hope are at least interesting, stimulating, relevant.[99]

But in so far as it does matter, the evidence from my research suggests that at its best, teaching about the Holocaust in the RE syllabus can fulfil the criteria advanced by Cox as well as providing unique and much needed insights into the subject. As one teacher who introduced a study of Jewish theological responses to the problem of religious belief, evil and suffering into the Holocaust syllabus told me:

> My previous head of department at my old school said 'I'm not using that, they won't get it', but I did and even with the lower ability kids... they have group discussions and I go around and ask them what they think of it and... it's an academic challenge for them... I've never had a child that didn't get it.[100]

Conclusions

In this chapter I have argued that from a Christian theological perspective that takes seriously the insights gained from political theology, a guarded endorsement can be given to the project of Holocaust education within the secondary school History syllabus. On the one hand political theology insists that the Christian churches cannot be oblivious to the issues of justice, prejudice, discrimination and citizenship that are central to the government's emphasis in teaching the subject in secondary schools. On the other hand, political theology warns us against too easy an acceptance by the churches of the predominant political values of any given society. As liberation theologians have made clear, these may at their worst be unjust and un-Christian. The very prominent role assumed by the teaching of the Holocaust within the state History syllabus may have harmful as well as beneficial outcomes and may harbour an uncritical attempt to extol the existing political and economic ordering of society as quite straightforwardly the antithesis of all that occurred during the Nazi period.

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[99] John Wilson, 'Taking Religious Education seriously', in Critical Perspectives on Christian Education, p. 38.
[100] RE Interview 3.

In the case of the teaching of the subject in the Religious Education syllabus, I have argued that Christian faith and Christian theology have a place as part of a process of critical-formative education that allows pupils to see both the potential dangers as well as the power for good inherent in religious practice and belief. Teaching about the Holocaust can be particularly valuable in this respect in revealing the history of religious persecution and intolerance that Christian belief has often entailed. This has a clear implication for the teaching of the Holocaust within a Religious Studies framework. I began this work with an assumption that teachers would still be limited to an earlier framework in which hostility to the Jews was still highlighted and some of the more recent scholarly insights into the persecution of a wide variety of groups would not have been fully taken on board. I have discovered that the opposite has proven to be the case. The subject is more in danger of losing contact with anti-Semitism as a result of a diffuse and often ill-focussed concentration on genocide and human rights that characterises the teaching within the History syllabus. If this trend is to be reversed then RE can play a big role in doing so. If done well it can be of immense value to young people in understanding the dangers of religious intolerance and prejudice that Christianity, like any other religion, needs to be constantly aware of, as well as promoting inter-faith dialogue between faiths. It can also present pupils with evidence of the way in which harmful theological formulations from the past not only should, but can be changed.

Conclusion

Issues of Methodology

In chapter one of this thesis I placed my own work within the context of the research that had already been carried out into the teaching of the Holocaust in British secondary schools. To date Deirdre Burke has conducted the most extensive empirical research in the classroom and Geoffrey Short has also undertaken several smaller scale studies. Carrie Supple and Ian Davies have made interesting and valuable contributions of a more theoretical kind. My own research differed from Burke's in a number of respects and I will now assess the extent to which my approach turned out to have strengths and weaknesses in comparison to hers.

I would argue that my decision to include RE departments in my study has produced some worthwhile findings, even though the Holocaust is specified as a compulsory unit of work only within History at key stage 3. I have found considerable evidence to suggest that the Holocaust is frequently included within RE as well as in History and in fact many of the teaching aims associated with teaching about the Holocaust put forward by government fit more easily into RE than into other subject areas. I also attempted to provide a Christian theological perspective, rather than a purely secular one in assessing the value of teaching the subject. I would defend the validity of this decision on the grounds that the teaching of the Holocaust is inescapably bound up with questions of ethics and fundamental world-views. There is no possibility of adopting a supposedly 'objective' stance when confronted with the issues of life, death and human morality raised by the Holocaust. As I have tried to show, the use of insights derived from Christian political theology calls into question some of the rather grandiose and ideologically motivated assumptions that lie behind the emphasis placed upon this subject, particularly in the History syllabus.

My research also differed from Burke's in that I was primarily concerned with the experience of teachers rather than pupils. This raises some complex issues. On the one hand, Burke's consultation with only ten Holocaust scholars, most of whom were not British, does not provide many detailed insights into what teachers are aiming to do and actually doing in the classroom; on the other hand, there is no doubt that studying pupils' understanding of the Holocaust by asking them about their responses is a vital part of any overall assessment of the impact of Holocaust education in schools. By asking teachers, as I did, about the pupils' understanding

of the subject I am aware that there may be a significant gap between learning aims and outcomes. Even so, too much can be made of this problem. Experienced and sensitive teachers do provide worthwhile insights over time about their pupils' understanding. At the same time questionnaire responses from relatively young pupils may be heavily influenced by teachers' expectations; nor do they indicate the extent to which the subject retains its impact a year or so later. It is enough to note here that no one so far has produced this kind of comprehensive analysis and there is therefore room for further research.

By looking at contemporary scholarship within Holocaust studies and current debates regarding the transmission of scholarly knowledge in a way that Burke did not seek to do, I hoped to show something about the intellectual context in which the subject is now being taught and highlight how this impacts on the teaching of the subject in schools. I made this decision with some trepidation since one likely outcome was that the interpretative concerns of scholars within universities would be of little or no relevance to school teachers hard pressed for time and for whom the Holocaust could only be a small part of a much wider syllabus. I have tried to show that this is not the case. In chapter two, I discussed a number of important developments in the area of contemporary Holocaust scholarship. Study of the Holocaust has become increasingly complicated and the role of the Holocaust historian has itself been subject to scrutiny, even though the impact of the Holocaust on Western thought, society, culture and politics has not diminished. By looking at postmodernism, issues surrounding history, memory and politicisation, and the current debates regarding the definition of the Holocaust and its supposed uniqueness, I tried to bring out those developments likely to influence teachers as well as highlighting those issues with important implications for the pedagogic task.

While it is necessary to examine the intellectual context from which teaching emerges, the overall impact of postmodernism should not be over-stated. There may be an air of sceptical self-awareness about the teaching of History that has filtered down to teachers, but in my view these debates are too complex to have a substantial impact in the classroom at this time. Teachers after all need to be pragmatic. Whilst their aim is to impart to pupils both facts and an understanding of historical method, the latter is not at an advanced level of sophistication. However, while postmodernism does not appear to directly impinge upon teaching at the moment, this may not always be the case. As Beverley Southgate has concluded:

> The postmodern challenge to historical study can't just be ignored... postmodernity is a *condition*, and it's one we're privileged (or condemned) to

> live in...it's surely time to set about our own construction. That implies first a need to formulate some answer to the questions of what it's all *for* – the 'why' of history. The time for unreflective study of the past – with no thought, that is, for why we're doing it, or what it is we're doing – has passed.[1]

But other aspects of contemporary debate are much more relevant to the classroom. There is, for example, a lively ongoing debate within the journal Teaching History that draws upon the work of scholars in the field, though one would be unwise to make too many assumptions about how widely this is read. What is more striking from the interviews I carried out is that although teachers may not articulate the issues in quite the same way, questions raised by scholars such as Cole, Wollaston and Finkelstein about the politicisation and mythologizing of the Holocaust are understood by teachers and are therefore relevant to understanding pedagogic practice in schools. This was particularly evident in my discussion with teachers about the problems associated with the uniqueness and particularity of the Holocaust and the use of sources such as Schindler's List.

Like Burke, the approach I used was a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Although there is a wealth of debate concerning the validity and reliability of both approaches, having considered the benefits of each approach and the arguments for and against these, I concluded that it was possible and indeed desirable for me to combine them. I agreed with Babbie's view that 'some research situations and topics are most amenable to qualitative examination, others to quantification.'[2] The debates concerning the place of the Holocaust in contemporary scholarship, the legislative framework and governmental expectations prompted me to begin with a quantitative approach. This was because quantitative research aims to explain situations and events in general, from a detached and supposedly objective perspective. The questionnaires formed the other quantitative element and were intended to produce a 'picture' of current teaching practice. A more limited number of in-depth interviews formed the qualitative element of my research. Here my focus was on the teachers' experience and qualitative methods were the most appropriate method for gaining this type of understanding. By using a qualitative approach, I could also change or redirect my focus allowing concepts and theories initially used in drawing up the questionnaires to be reconsidered in the light of the research findings.

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[1] Beverley Southgate, History: What & Why? (London: Routledge, 2nd Edition, 1996), p. 158.
[2] Earl Babbie, The Practice of Social Research, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 8th edition, 1998), p. 38.

This chance to re-think was important. In order to clarify some of the issues raised in the first three chapters and to create a picture of how the Holocaust was actually being taught, I constructed two questionnaires, one aimed at History teachers and one aimed at RE teachers. The questions were designed to ascertain: how much time teachers had to spend on the Holocaust and whether this was adequate; whether the Schemes of Work (for History) or the Agreed Syllabus (for RE) were used and what changes could be made to these so that they could be improved; whether other victims of the Holocaust were included; the resources used by teachers; the importance teachers attached to teaching the Holocaust; and finally whether the subject presented teachers with any unique problems. These questionnaires were sent to all secondary schools in Swindon, Wiltshire and Bristol.

The questionnaire results did not provide the clear or coherent picture I had hoped for; indeed it would be truthful to suggest that initially they added to my confusion. While I had expected there to be some discrepancies between government guidelines and teaching practice, I was not prepared for the level of discrepancy the questionnaires revealed. By examining the governmental expectations prior to issuing the questionnaires, I made several assumptions (particularly regarding use of the Schemes of Work) that affected the way the questionnaires were constructed. Because of these assumptions, the questionnaire results were less focussed than thy might have been and with hindsight I should have considered this more carefully before sending them. On the other hand, the questionnaires did provide some interesting insights that helped shape the later interviews. Most notably, teachers expressed concern with regards to the teaching time available; the lack of resources; their own ability to teach the subject adequately; and the ability of pupils to understand it in a meaningful way. The issue of approaching the Holocaust in a particularist as opposed to a universalist way was raised and a number of ethical considerations were also voiced. The variety of responses showed that many teachers in both RE and History considered teaching about the Holocaust to be important and there was considerable awareness of questions raised in Holocaust scholarship, particularly in relation to the issue of uniqueness. Many of the more general lessons the government outlined such as the importance of remembrance, justice, tolerance and racial inclusiveness were cited as reasons for the importance of studying the Holocaust. It is perhaps the case that the confusing results produced by the questionnaire partly reflect the more general confusion and complexity that surrounds the study and teaching of the Holocaust and not simply my own limitations in drawing it up.

The interviews enabled me to look further at the areas of inconsistent and incoherent practice revealed in the questionnaires. I identified four general areas I wished to examine in greater detail. The first of these related to the Jewish particularity of the Holocaust. The QCA and DFE guidelines suggested that the Holocaust was taught specifically in relation to the Jews; however, the questionnaires had shown that many teachers included a wide variety of victims and I was concerned that in fact the Jewish aspects of the Holocaust could be lost completely. Secondly, I wanted to look at the way teachers were using the Holocaust and the extent to which the emphasis, in line with the governmental expectations, was on the more universal lessons of racial inclusiveness, tolerance, pluralism and support for democratic values. Here I was concerned that if the Holocaust was being used in this way, it could become a confused muddle from which pupils gained little understanding of any value. Thirdly, I wanted to assess how scholarly interpretations of the Holocaust and debates about collective memory affected, if at all, teachers and the way the subject was being taught. Finally, I wanted to create a more detailed picture of how the Holocaust is taught in secondary schools. The questionnaires provided a wealth of information and I wanted to look at this material in greater depth. I was interested in whether teaching about the Holocaust had an impact on pupils and more generally, if the outcome was always beneficial. The interviews provided rich material on all of these questions.

Another methodological question concerns the size of the sample. Clearly, for reasons of practicality some kind of limit has to be placed on this. For example, in her study Burke limited her enquiry to ten scholars and one hundred school children. My sample was not a particularly large one. I sent out 120 questionnaires which covered all the state secondary schools in my chosen area, but understandably I did not receive returns from a significant number. It is important not to claim too much for this study. Fifteen in-depth interviews, ten in History and five in RE, and forty-nine returned questionnaires out of one hundred and twenty sent out does not appear to be a basis for making sweeping claims. What matters of course is its adequacy. Is it sufficiently representative to do the job? The scale of this study was deliberate. Financial resources were limited. It was also vital to carry out a series of detailed interviews in order to raise issues generated by the questionnaires and to look closely at the way teachers approached and taught this subject. This was necessarily a time-consuming process. There is, however, no reason to think that the small numbers used in the questionnaires and interviews are unusual or unrepresentative. By contacting schools in suburban, inner city and rural areas in

the west of England I tried to ensure a reasonably representative geographical and social mix of state secondary schools. I would not, however, claim that the study encompasses the full range of teaching situations within which the Holocaust is taught in this country. Private and confessional schools have not been included. It is quite possible, for example, that the place of the Holocaust within the curriculum and the aspects covered or emphasised might be quite different in, say, a Roman Catholic private school. The role of the Catholic Church and the Papacy at the time and the reformulation of Christian attitudes to the Jews since 1945 might assume a larger place than in secular state schools – or of course the subject might be ignored altogether. I have also indicated that pupils in my sample area came into very little contact with Jews. In some parts of the country such as London and Manchester this would not be the case to the same extent and this might influence the extent to which and the way in which the Holocaust was taught in schools. Given the relatively small size of the Jewish population in modern Britain, the former situation is the more representative. Another important question that has not been examined as a result of the ethnic limitations of my sample area is the potentially very different impact of Holocaust teaching in schools on Jewish and non-Jewish pupils. Whereas the emphasis placed upon using the Holocaust to combat potential racism and anti-Semitism may be appropriate for non-Jewish children, its centrality may be problematic for Jewish pupils. As has been pointed out, the emphasis placed upon the Holocaust may not be relevant to Jewish children born several generations after these events and the construal of Jewish history as essentially one of victimhood may be problematic and certainly not affirmative and empowering.

A different kind of question about the representative nature of the sample is also very important. There is a likelihood that those teachers who returned the questionnaires were more interested in the subject than those who did not. It may be the case that the picture painted of the teaching of the subject in secondary schools from an analysis of the interviews is an unduly rosy one. This consideration is reinforced when it is realised that those teachers chosen for the in-depth interviews were by and large those who provided the fullest and most interesting responses to the initial questionnaires. Again this suggests a process of selection skewed in favour of best practice. This needs to be borne in mind when I suggested that the rather worrying picture of confusion and inconsistency in teaching practices revealed in the questionnaires was somewhat alleviated by the much more positive picture derived from the interviews. This should not detract from my finding during the interviews of high levels of enthusiasm, commitment and competence on the part of teachers, particularly given that some had to work in very difficult and deprived

areas. What this suggests overall, however, is that the questionnaires provide a snap shot of the very variable quality of Holocaust education in state secondary schools which if anything may be understated in my findings, and that the interviews provide insights into the challenges and achievements of teachers in situations of current best practice.

My own involvement as a researcher in the process of data gathering also needs to be considered. In the hope of encouraging frank responses, I was careful to stress in both the questionnaires and in the interviews that in the final thesis there would be nothing that could identify an individual teacher or a school. In both the questionnaires and the interviews, space was provided for teachers to address issues that they thought important and which had not been raised by my questions. Some also commented on the questions themselves and not always favourably. My own biases and preconceptions also need to be considered. Quite properly, some of these have been changed by the research itself. For example, starting from a politically and theologically liberal perspective my assumption was that the teaching of the Holocaust would be too rigidly fixed on an 'outdated' perspective that gave undue weight to the Jewish dimensions of suffering and persecution and ignored the findings of more recent research into the nature of Nazi ideology and the persecution of a wide range of other groups such as Gypsies, the mentally handicapped and homosexuals. The opposite seems to me to be the case. My research has led me to become troubled by the omission of the specifically religious and Jewish perspective in favour of a far less focussed secular liberal emphasis upon the universal lessons of toleration and inclusiveness that can be drawn from the Shoah. My concern is not that these values are unimportant, but rather that such a focus fails to do justice to the events of the past and in practice runs the risk of distorting and emasculating the lessons that can be drawn from the past. What has also changed is the now much greater depth of my regard for the seriousness and enthusiasm with which many teachers approach the teaching of this difficult topic. Nothing in my critique is meant to detract from this.

Teaching the Holocaust: Learning Outcomes

Deirdre Burke drew two main conclusions from her research into Holocaust teaching in schools. Firstly, she was in general optimistic that teaching about the Holocaust was a transformative educational experience for pupils and could make the world a better place (even though for this to happen, teachers would need more in-service training). This enthusiastic judgement is shared by the contributors to the

2000 volume Teaching the Holocaust: Educational Dimensions, Principles and Practice. As one puts it:

> Holocaust education stands, of course, as an expression of our desire that never again should Jews be subject to similar barbarities. It also strives to offer us the hope that in the future no group will be exposed to like abominations on the grounds of race, religion or culture. However, the most cursory acquaintance with recent history suggests that the lessons to be learned from studying the Holocaust need endlessly to be brought to everyone's attention. The significance of teaching about the Holocaust as part of an educational programme can scarcely be overemphasized.[3]

In my own research, a less optimistic picture emerged. I would agree with Burke that the learning outcomes espoused by the majority of teachers were designed to draw out broad moral lessons and certainly the questionnaires indicated that the Holocaust was considered important or vital because of the moral lessons relating to racism, prejudice, and tolerance that it provided. But my research suggests that what goes on in practice is considerably more varied than this broad consensus might suggest. This fact is somewhat concealed by looking only at the teaching of the subject within History where it at least has a defined place within the history of the Second World War. Its place within the RE syllabi that are drawn up at local level is considerably more varied. The Holocaust can be introduced in a wide range of areas from units on Judaism, to units on the nature of God and the problem of evil. The numerous expectations and aims within History and RE regarding the Holocaust do reflect the government's position concerning the subject to a certain extent. As well as historical facts and moral lessons there is a focus upon those qualities, such as 'rights and responsibilities' that are considered important for creating model citizens. But, overall, the educational aims of Holocaust Memorial Day, the way in which this is aimed at schools in addition to the compulsory unit within History, and the varied ways the Holocaust can be introduced into RE, are bound to create a wide variety of teaching objectives and methods. This was certainly the case in my sample. As one teacher summed up the situation, 'I suppose they [the pupils] get a hit and miss approach.'

A further concern from my research is the lack of importance attached to teaching about anti-Semitism. The absence of anti-Semitic attitudes among pupils in the West Country and the lack of contact with Jewish people were cited as reasons for this lacuna in what is taught. The assumption teachers made was that anti-Semitism was not an issue. Geoffrey Short has addressed this question in his own

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[3] Ian Gregory, 'Teaching about the Holocaust: Perplexities, Issues and Suggestions', in Ian Davies, (ed.), Teaching the Holocaust: Educational Dimensions, and Practice, (London: Continuum, 2000), pp. 49-60, 59.

research, pointing to the dangers of readily accepting the view that the absence of anti-Semitic behaviours means that anti-Semitism does not exist. It is possible that the preconceptions some pupils may have are not being addressed and this could lead to an understanding of the Holocaust that does not adequately clarify why the Jews were singled out, or why the German population did not do more to resist this aspect of the regime's policies. Failure to address existing preconceptions was further emphasised by the attitudes of pupils to Germans that were mentioned by a number of teachers. Anti-German sentiments in schools were expressed fairly frequently and many of the teachers I interviewed did not seem to take this form of racism seriously, though one raised it particularly forcefully in the context of using Daniel Goldhagen's Book Hitler' Willing Executioners with its claim that German society developed a uniquely murderous from of 'eliminationist anti-Semitism'. This view was the exception, and my overall findings reinforce the conclusion made by Short that one consequence of teaching about the Shoah was that children could come to view the Germans as uniquely evil purveyors of anti-Semitism and racism. Here, as one teacher admitted, the issue was not that teaching about the Holocaust alone created such anti-German stereotypes, but that it reinforced attitudes derived from popular culture, for example in the area of soccer rivalry.

Burke's second conclusion strongly emphasized the unique pedagogic challenges presented by the Holocaust. I did, like Burke, find evidence to suggest that the Holocaust is a very challenging subject. Many teachers expressed doubts regarding their own and their pupils' abilities to adequately understand the Holocaust, particularly in the case of younger children. Although some teachers approached the subject in an almost reverential manner, (thus distinguishing it from other topics), in my view it is going too far to say that it is unique in the challenges it presents. Burke may also have overestimated the uniquely traumatic impact learning about the Holocaust could have on pupils. To conclude that: 'The impact of such learning is still likely to be like "bombing sleeping towns" which will "scar pupils for life"'[4] is, I feel too strong a statement. While lessons on the Holocaust were considered by some teachers to have greater impact and produce greater interest, fascination, and debate among pupils than other subjects, I found no evidence to suggest that they could as a result be 'scarred for life' and this was not a concern expressed by the teachers. In so far as they had reservations in this area they were abut the inability of pupils to take the subject matter seriously enough.

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[4] Deirdre Burke, 'Holocaust Education: Teaching and Learning Perspectives,' p. 250.

A further cause for concern in the area of learning outcomes arises from the evident tension and confusion in teachers' minds over the presentation of the Holocaust as either a specific event with particular implications for Judaism and for our understanding of anti-Semitism, or as a vehicle for commending universal values of toleration, democracy and inclusiveness. If the latter aims are embraced, because of its vivid and shocking nature, the Holocaust comes to be regarded as an almost uniquely valuable pedagogic tool. Some of the confusion and tension between these approaches is reflected within the National Curriculum for History. Here the Holocaust is studied in connection with earlier units on twentieth-century conflicts and although it appears to be primarily focussed on the Jewish aspects, there is also reference to 'other victims' and 'Hitler's racial motivations'. Here the particularist approach and the universal approach do not appear to sit together comfortably. In addition to this, whilst the primary emphasis is on the analysis and comprehension of historical events, as would be expected, the school curriculum's objectives for promoting spiritual and moral development have been translated within the compulsory History unit into trans-historical teaching about democracy and citizenship values.

The teachers I interviewed tried hard to avoid robbing the Holocaust of its uniqueness and comparisons to other global events were carefully considered. When comparisons were made, they were intended to make understanding the Holocaust and its continued relevance easier for pupils to grasp. In many cases, comparisons were also used to generate an empathetic response from pupils. For this reason, comparisons varied from references to the situation in Bosnia to instances of bullying in the playground. For teachers, there did not appear to be the same issues attached to maintaining the unique position of the Holocaust as there are for academics and Holocaust historians. The ferocity and passion surrounding the arguments about the uniqueness of the Holocaust generated by Jewish and non-Jewish scholars particularly when used in a comparative manner were not factors which teachers seemed to consider when they made such comparisons themselves. Instead, the worth of this perspective was evaluated in terms of the benefits that this type of approach has for developing pupils understanding. As would be expected, teachers seemed more conscious of the pedagogic issues regarding effective teaching than the current academic debate. In my view, this does not mean that the issues raised by scholars should not be considered more thoroughly by teachers. There is a legitimate concern that the Holocaust could be trivialised when compared to other seemingly unrelated events. Some of the parallels drawn, for example, between the Holocaust and life in medieval Wales, or

between the conduct of the Nazis and school bullying would not I believe, always aid pupils' comprehension. Before one is too quick to criticise, however, one needs to be fully aware of the challenge teachers' face in trying to teach pupils about the past. Terry Haydn puts this point in a balanced way:

> In some respects, the Holocaust is problematic and double-edged for History teachers. In his Principles of History Teaching, Burston (1963) pointed out that one of the central challenges facing the History teacher is to persuade the pupils of the relevance and importance of the past. Given the continuing high profile of the Holocaust in the media generally, it would seem to offer more possibilities in this respect than the wool trade in the fourteenth century, for example, or Renaissance architecture.
> Against this is the teacher's dilemma about exactly what learning outcomes are desired from a study of the Holocaust, and how to achieve them. Like any other topic in History, the Holocaust can be well taught or badly taught. If we cannot do justice to a topic such as the Holocaust, what is the point of inflicting History on young people?[5]

Understandably, the teachers I interviewed were primarily concerned with what works in the classroom, and it was repeatedly said that the vividness and relevance of the Holocaust for pupils made it an attractive subject to teach. Relevance needs nevertheless to be carefully handled. So much about the Holocaust occurred in a society that was not like our own as in one that was. If teachers are confused about these issues then the same will be true of pupils.

Should we teach the Holocaust at all in schools?

In the quotation I have just given, Terry Haydn makes the assumption that not only is the Holocaust an important subject to teach, but because of its relevance and striking character, it is one that we ought to be able to teach well. As he puts it: 'If we cannot do justice to a topic such as the Holocaust, what is the point of inflicting History on young people?' But is this assumption justified? My thesis suggests that a strong case could be made for not including the subject in either the History or the RE syllabus. In the case of the former, it is interesting to note that when the National Curriculum History Working Group published its Interim Report in June 1989 on the proposed content of the syllabus, neither the Second World War nor the rise and fall of Nazi Germany were listed as core units of study.[6] This was only amended after lobbying by a group of MPs, Jewish communal organisations and academics so that in its final report in April 1990 the History Working Group recommended that the

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[5] Terry Haydn, 'Teaching the Holocaust Through History', in Ian Davies, (ed.), Teaching the Holocaust: Educational Dimensions, and Practice, (London: Continuum, 2000), pp. 135-149, 135-6.

[6] For this see Philip Rubenstein & Warren Taylor, 'Teaching about the Holocaust in the National Curriculum, in The British Journal of Holocaust Education, vol, 1, no. 1, Summer 1992, pp. 47-54, 47.

study of the Second World War become a compulsory unit of study and that under the heading of essential information 14-16 year olds should be assessed on 'the causes of the war; Hitler; casualties of war; genocide; the Holocaust.'[7] What the lobbying group succeeded in doing was to raise the status of the subject from a small but necessary part of understanding the events and consequences of the Second World War to becoming the fundamental aspect of twentieth-century European history. As they argued: 'To ignore the phenomenon of how one of the world's most civilised nations could have condoned a State policy of mass murder and genocide is to leave unanswered one of the central questions of modern civilisation.' They also stressed the relevance of the topic to the present:

> Persecution of minorities did not stop in 1945. We believe that the comprehensive study of *this* extreme example of prejudice and discrimination will give pupils insight into the suffering experienced by minority groups in many parts of the world today.

What needs to be highlighted here is the use of the word 'comprehensive'. It might be the case that such an in-depth examination of the topic would produce the results claimed by the lobbyists, but the secondary school History syllabus was not and could not be expected to produce this. As the authors of the Final Report made clear, there were limitations of time and resources on what could be achieved which had been their original justification for leaving this topic out of the syllabus. In my view many of the difficulties experienced by teachers derive from the very high expectations placed upon this subject within the History curriculum which have been reinforced by the government's advocacy of Holocaust Memorial Day and the role of the Holocaust in promoting citizenship.

It also has to be asked whether this particularly complex and difficult example of prejudice which the lobbyists themselves describe as 'extreme' is the right one to use to bring about the learning outcomes that are sought. As I have shown, the government's agenda is clearly to promote a particular form of remembrance one that makes obvious the importance of personal and collective action and responsibility. This form of remembrance aims to combat racism, promote multi-culturalism and allow pupils to 'accept and embrace diversity'. As we have seen not everyone accepts the reasons put forward for choosing the Holocaust specifically, rather than another instance of genocide. The pressure exerted by interested parties, the convenience of choosing a tragedy for which British government and society can only be held very partially responsible and the absence of a democratic

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[7] Ibid., p. 52.

government in Germany at the time - allowing for the consequent favourable comparisons and the inevitable conclusions drawn that emphasize the benefits of democracy - have all been adduced as reasons not to rely on this particular example as the centrepiece of anti-racial teaching. Nor should we forget the views of those History teachers who are concerned that proper understanding of what happened and why will be sacrificed in the rush to derive clear and easy moral lessons from the subject.

A final consideration is that despite the rhetoric of the lobbyists, the Holocaust is actually far less securely established within the History syllabus than might be supposed. There is an inescapable contingency about what is taught that is subject to the passage of time. One of the reasons why the Second World War came to figure so prominently in the final syllabus was undoubtedly its significance at the time it was being debated in explaining the existence of the eastern block and the shaping of Europe at a time when the collapse of the Berlin Wall and of the Communist system was focussing attention on our changing sense of European identity. Here the real issue may be whether the Holocaust will come to be seen as 'a paradigm event' that has irrevocably shaped western consciousness.[8] Yet even events of this sort are subject to contestation and change over time. It is interesting to note, for example, that the History Working Group that drew up the 1990 Final Report could not find space for the Reformation as a compulsory unit within the syllabus, an indication of the growing impact of secularisation on our understanding of the past and how it shapes the present. On the other hand, recent events may lead to a renewed interest in the cultural and political interaction of Christianity and Islam in the history of Europe.

Perhaps what can be claimed for the study of the Holocaust within History at the present time is more modest. Teachers should not be burdened with expectations that the teaching of this one subject will foster moral growth amongst pupils and aid governmental processes of social engineering. The Holocaust remains for the time being deeply embedded in public consciousness and popular culture. To take one trivial example: on its recent footballing trip to Poland, the English squad was taken to pay their respects at Auschwitz, a visit reported by the kinds of popular newspapers that do not normally afford space to this subject. So

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[8] I have taken this term from theologian Kenneth Surin in his study Theology and the Problem of Evil, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986). For Surin a paradigm event is one of such force and horror that it comes to stand for the problem of evil and suffering and a God of love for a particular generation. He argues that this was true of the Lisbon earthquake in the eighteenth century; of Darwinism in the nineteenth and the Holocaust for our own generation.

long as this is the case, pupils need to be given accurate information about what happened and what implications it might have for our own society.

A case can also be advanced against the teaching of the Holocaust within RE. As I have shown, the subject has no secure place within the locally generated syllabi and can appear in a bewildering array of forms. It can be used to teach about the dangers of religious prejudice; about contemporary Jewish experience and theology; and as a prime example of the problem of theodicy. It need not of course be taught at all. I have found in my research examples of all four of these usages and non-usages. The Holocaust has in many respects an even less obvious and secure place within the teaching of RE than in the History syllabus.[9]

Nevertheless, I would want to argue that its place within RE is potentially very important and should be reinforced for a number of reasons. Firstly, although there is evidence that some RE teachers like many of their History colleagues shy clear of drawing ethical lessons from their subject this is far less often the case. Moral formation remains a part of Religious Education in our schools even though, as I have shown earlier, there is widespread disagreement about its content and how it should be presented to pupils – the difference between learning about religions and learning from them. As Susan Foster and Carrie Mercer have argued, the study of the Holocaust can raise moral and philosophical questions in RE that are unlikely to find a place in a History syllabus. These might include questions about retribution, forgiveness and reconciliation in the face of great human evil.[10] Even so, much of the same kind of caution needs to be exercised here as in the teaching of the history of the Holocaust. This topic is not the only way of presenting these issues to children. One thinks, for example, of how the same issues are being raised in Northern Ireland and South Africa.

Secondly, and one of the most important of my research findings, is that within the secular History syllabus both Jewish experience and the history of anti-Semitism are being treated extremely superficially, if at all, as a result of the pressure to draw generalised moral lessons about racism, intolerance and persecution from the history of the time. Given that many historians do not have a particular interest in religion and are subject to severe time constraints by the National Curriculum, the placing of the Holocaust in the RE syllabus is vitally important if the particular Jewish

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[9] The governments' new recommendations for a national framework for RE will not change this situation, since RE will still not be compulsory.

[10] Sue Foster & Carrie Mercer, 'Teaching the Holocaust through Religious Education' in Ian Davies, Teaching the Holocaust, pp. 150-161, 154.

elements are not to be lost over time. Although Deirdre Burke made passing reference to the place of Holocaust education within RE, this was largely ignored in her subsequent research. Here, too, caution needs to be exercised. If, as teachers in the West Country suggested, the apparent absence of anti-Semitism among children is explained by their lack of familiarity with Jews and Judaism, it is within the context of RE rather than History that this can be addressed. It must be stressed that to ensure that anti-Semitism is not being fostered, the knowledge conveyed should be carefully considered. As Geoffrey Short warns:

> Bearing in mind Christianity's historic role in perpetuating anti-Semitism... For whilst it does not follow that those who teach Christianity will do so with an anti-Semitic slant, the enhanced status now enjoyed by Christianity in state schools clearly increases the risk... learning about Judaism will not necessarily diminish anti-Semitism. Indeed if taught badly it could exacerbate it.[11]

My own observations of RE teachers lead to a far less pessimistic conclusion, and I was impressed by the way in which they made efforts to present Judaism as a living religious tradition on its own terms.

Thirdly, I would place great emphasis on the way in which within the RE syllabus the Holocaust can be used to address questions of religious conflict, prejudice and inter-faith dialogue. This point is well made by Foster and Mercier:

> In secondary schools, the issue of persecution and, in particular, the persecution of minorities may appear in history or in social studies. However, the problem of religious persecution raises some important and difficult issues that are different from those raised in relation to the persecution of minorities in general. In many programmes of study on the Holocaust, students look at the centuries of religious persecution that came to fruition in the terrible events of the Holocaust. In the light of this history they can reflect on the experience facing people now who, on the one hand, hold strong religious convictions, while on the other recognize the rights of their neighbours to behave differently. These issue lead on to the challenging question of how to develop positive relations between the different faith communities in our society.[12]

My interviews with RE teachers indicated that they go some way to meeting these objectives by offering pupils an understanding of the Holocaust and of anti-Semitism from a Jewish perspective. This is extremely valuable in countering the much poorer coverage of these areas in History, but there is scope here for much more to be done. Bearing in mind Geoffrey Short's strictures about the predominantly Christian context in which these issues are addressed in most

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[11] Geoffrey Short, 'Combatting Anti-Semitism: A Dilemma For Anti-Racist Education', in The British Journal of Educational Studies, vol. 39, 1991, pp. 33-44, 38.
[12] Sue Foster & Carrie Mercer, 'Teaching the Holocaust through Religious Education', p. 155.

schools, the kind of critical-formative approach advocated by Astley is important to pupils from both nominally Christian backgrounds as well as those with a firmer faith commitment. This would allow them to affirm the values and strengths of their religious tradition whilst being open to an honest evaluation of its shortcomings and potential dangers. Nor need this be merely a negative experience. Examples of those such as Bonhoeffer and Pastor Trocmé who in varying degrees stood for Christian values that lead them to oppose the Holocaust have a place in teaching about the subject. Two areas that could profitably be addressed much more fully in the syllabus are the reformulation of Christian theology and practice in the light of the Holocaust and the importance of the subject in Jewish-Christian dialogue. Without in any way wishing to lessen the enormity of the Holocaust, the emphasis on using it as a moral warning about what might happen again has a tendency to leave the subject marooned in a sea of negativity which places too little emphasis on the ways in which it is being responded to positively in the present. As well as introducing pupils to Judaism as a living religion, some knowledge of the way in which crucial elements of the teaching of contempt such as the deicide charge have been repudiated and some exposure to the work of the Council of Christians and Jews would help here.

There are also some practical issues that need to be addressed. On the basis of the material gained from the questionnaires I would agree with Burke's call for more in-service training. Taking into account the practical considerations such as time constraints and the packed content of the National Curriculum this would have to be particularly focussed in order to be beneficial. In the case of History teaching this needs to focus on the historically specific experience of Judaism in the Holocaust. In RE, as I have just indicated, some emphasis needs to be placed on the ongoing and evolving responses of believers to the Holocaust. There is also a need for much more explicit cross-curricula links within schools. It is clear from talking to teachers that they have a generalised but not sufficiently detailed grasp of what aspects of the subject are taught in RE, History, English and (where it has been introduced) citizenship. Another recommendation concerns sources. Although I wouldn't want to support the rigid dictation of resources to teachers, there is a need for a more uniform approach. The encroachment of popular cultural representations of history is becoming widespread and while most of the teachers I interviewed were using material carefully and were mindful of the dangers of this, this may not be the case in all schools. The ubiquity of Schindler's List as a teaching aid, for example, is not the result of any carefully thought out strategy but rather of its availability and cheapness.

It is now time for a final stocktaking. Is the Holocaust being well taught in our schools? At its best undoubtedly, but the picture is much more variable than some of its advocates have been willing to admit. Is it necessary to teach the subject as some teachers as well as academics claim in order to put across to pupils certain fundamental ethical standards of belief and behaviour? Here I would more reluctantly answer no given the commitment, integrity and enthusiasm of the best teachers I encountered. Can it bear the weight of expectation placed upon it as an educational as well as a cultural icon? Almost certainly not. Are teachers then wasting their time? Not at present. Earlier I referred to Baudrillard's extremely pessimistic view of the state of contemporary collective memory and of public morality. Baudrillard argued that: 'such basic notions as responsibility, objective causes, or the meaning of history (or lack thereof) have disappeared, or are in the process of disappearing. The moral or social conscience is now a phenomenon entirely governed by the media'.[13] Engaging children with the realties of historical events and their consequences and with the power for good and evil of religious belief and practice is one way of countering such deleterious forces in our society. We also need to remember that the Holocaust has become, like a relatively small number of other historical events, a part of our history and a part of our contemporary consciousness. This may not always be so, but so long as it is the case we should do everything we can to ensure that it is taught well.

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[13] J. Baudrillard, The Transparency of Evil. Essays on Extreme Phenomenon, translated by James Benedict, (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 90-91.

Appendix One

To be completed by a History teacher

THE CONTENTS OF THIS FORM ARE *ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENTIAL.* INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE RESPONDENT WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Notes for completion:

On multiple choice questions please circle your answer.
If extra space is required for detailed answers then please use the attached sheet.

1. The Holocaust is a statutory unit of study in the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. Approximately how many hours do you spend teaching this particular unit?

1-4 5-8 9-12 13-16 17+

2. Do you think that the time you spend teaching this unit is:

Less than adequate Adequate More than adequate Not sure

Please provide the reasons for this:

3. Do you use the Schemes of Work provided by the Qualifications Curriculum Authority (QCA) for this unit?

Never Occasionally Regularly Always

If your answer is Never please go directly to question 8.

4. How well do the Schemes of Work deal with the subject of the Holocaust?

Less than adequate Adequate More than adequate Not sure

Please provide reasons for this:

P.T.O

5. The Schemes of Work for this unit focus on the treatment of the Jews. When teaching the unit, do you include other groups persecuted by the Nazis?

Never Occasionally Regularly Always

If you have answered Never to this question, please proceed to question 6.
Otherwise please circle the groups you include from the list below:

Gypsies (Roma and Sinti)
Jehovah's Witnesses
Homosexuals
Mentally and/or physically handicapped
Poles
Political opponents
Slavs
Other (please provide details)

6. Is there anything you would like to add to the Schemes of Work for this unit?

Yes No

If yes, please provide details:

7. Is there anything you would like to remove from the existing Schemes of Work for this unit?

Yes No

If yes, please provide details:

8. Please provide details of the resources you most regularly use when teaching this unit:

9. How important do you think it is to introduce students to the Holocaust in this module on the Twentieth Century?

Vital Important Not very important Other

Please provide the reasons for this:

Would you like a summary of the results once the data has been collated:

Yes No

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

P.T.O

Please provide any further comments on the teaching of the Holocaust, I would be interested for example, to know if you think teaching this subject presents any unique problems.

To be completed by a Religious Studies teacher.

THE CONTENTS OF THIS FORM ARE *ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENTIAL*. INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE RESPONDENT WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Notes for completion:

On multiple choice questions please circle your answer.
If extra space is required please use the attached sheet.

1. Does the Agreed Syllabus issued by your Local Education Authority (LEA) refer to the Holocaust specifically?

Yes No Not Sure

If your answer is No, please proceed to question 5.

2. Is the Holocaust a mandatory subject?

Yes No

3. Please give the title of the unit the Holocaust is part of:

4. Which Key Stage is this taught to?

5. In your opinion how well does the Agreed Syllabus deal with the subject of the Holocaust?

Less than Adequate Adequate More Than Adequate Not Sure

Please provide reasons for your answer:

6. Is there anything you would like to add to the Agreed Syllabus, regarding the Holocaust?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide reasons:

P.T.O

7. Is there anything you would like to remove from the Agreed Syllabus, regarding the Holocaust?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide reasons:

8. Do you introduce this subject at any other time?

Yes No

If your answer is Yes, please provide details:

9. Approximately how many hours do you spend teaching about the Holocaust?

0-4 5-8 9-12 13+

10. When teaching this subject, do you include other groups persecuted by the Nazis?

Never Occasionally Regularly Always

If you have answered Never to this question, please proceed to question 11. Otherwise please circle the groups you include from the list below:

Gypsies (Roma and Sinti)
Jehovah's Witnesses
Homosexuals
Mentally and/or physically handicapped
Poles
Political opponents
Slavs
Other (please provide details):

11. If applicable, please provide details of the resources you most regularly use when teaching this subject:

12. How important do you think it is to introduce students to the Holocaust within Religious Studies?

Vital Important Not very important Other

Please provide reasons for your answer:

Would you like a summary of the results once the data has been collated?

Yes No

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

P.T.O

Please provide any further comments on the teaching of the Holocaust, I would be interested for example, to know if you think teaching this subject presents any unique problems.

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